

# Day of German Unity Special

## Like-minded allies committed to international law

**PETRA SIGMUND**  
AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE OF GERMANY



On Oct. 3, Germany commemorates the peaceful reunification of East and West Germany in 1990, having been divided by the Iron Curtain and the Cold War for almost 40 years. Just as much as we

Germans celebrate this joyful event, it carries meaning for the entire world, giving hope to countries still divided and delivering a message of freedom.

Freedom and democracy are core values that we share with Japan. Our countries may be more than 9,000 kilometers apart, but we are close in many aspects, as we are midsize countries, ranked third and fourth of the world's biggest economies. Additionally, we are exporting nations with a common interest in fair and free trade, we strongly support a rules-based international order and above

all, we work together in many different areas as trusted friends and partners. Our relationship has become more intense, diversified and important than ever.

Both countries share an understanding of the “Zeitenwende” (turning point). Just as much as Russia's war against Ukraine has caused profound changes in Germany, Japan is also adapting to a new and challenging security environment. Peace is no longer guaranteed, and to maintain it requires a whole range of efforts. Japan considerably supports Ukraine financially and politically and we are deeply grateful for this. We cherish Japan's important contributions to defending the principles of the U.N. Charter, especially the principle of peaceful resolution of conflicts. The respect for these principles is under pressure — not only in Europe, but also in the Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific is vital to Germany's and Europe's prosperity and security with almost 40% of Germany's trade outside the EU being conducted with this region. Owing to our close ties, Germany is especially sensitive to developments in the Indo-Pacific, where

uncertainties and challenges have increased significantly. Side by side with Japan and like-minded partners, Germany is committed to ensuring that international law, in particular the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, is upheld. In August, two German naval vessels visited Japan to underline our shared interest. Japan and Germany recently concluded an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement that brings our bilateral security and defense cooperation to a new level. We intend to further deepen our ties, perform joint exercises and show presence in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific, based on the idea that peace and security in both regions are interlinked.

The German-Japanese friendship is based on close bonds that have been built since the Meiji Era (1868 to 1912). Throughout 2024, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the partnership between our amazing capitals Berlin and Tokyo. We were proud that “Perfect Days” by the German producer and great Japanophile Wim Wenders opened the Tokyo International Film Festival last year and was nominated for the Academy

Awards. We are grateful to more than 50 Japanese-German Friendship Societies all over Japan and to more than 850 partnerships between Japanese and German universities — many of them dedicated to fields of high technology — who are guardians of German-Japanese friendship and cooperation.

Our governments conduct regular dialogues on all pressing issues of today. These include geopolitical questions, economic security, energy transition, fighting climate change, technological innovation and cyber defense, among others. Our parliamentarians frequently visit and consult each other, our companies and scientific institutions are stepping up their cooperation and our people have a genuine interest in each other, as reflected by a growing number of exchange programs and tourist activities. Both Germans and Japanese share a deep appreciation of culture and music, of craftsmanship, technical precision, innovation and the grit to improve products to perfection. These similarities help us in taking our relationship forward. With such strong foundations in place, we look forward to building on them.



**Ambassador-Designate Petra Sigmund poses with crew members from the German frigate Baden-Württemberg during a port of call in Tokyo on Aug. 20.**

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