

Switzerland national day

Swiss-Japan relations: Distance is no obstacle to like-mindedness

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The 721st year of the Swiss Confederation's existence was characterized by an economical and political stability that contrasts with the rather turbulent international environment. Certainly, Switzerland is also affected by the European sovereign debt crisis, notably through an over-valuation of the national currency. As a matter of fact, a very consequent intervention of the Swiss National Bank was needed to keep the exchange rate of the Swiss franc against the euro at a level which is acceptable for our export industry.



But despite this difficult situation, the Swiss economy proved to be resilient and performed comparatively well: In June 2012, unemployment dropped below 3 percent and the public balance sheet is in the black as

in previous years. This allowed a further reduction of our public debt to 36.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). With its economical strength and political stability, Switzerland seems to be well-positioned to tackle the challenges of the future.

But it would be short-sighted to rest on its laurels. Attractive regulatory framework conditions, a well-functioning infrastructure and the financing of education, science and technology have to be constantly tailored to fit this ever-changing environment, thus stimulating innovation and growth. In that sense, Switzerland has adapted its domestic legislation and international treaties in the field of financial services to new requirements following the collapse of Lehman Bros. and the need for international cooperation in fiscal matters. With this new strategy, Switzerland has created an excellent basis for its future as an internationally recognized financial center.

In all international rankings, Japan and Switzerland are placed



Centenary: The Jungfraubahn railway celebrates the 100th anniversary since it was fully opened with the inauguration of the station at Jungfrauoch on Aug. 1, 1912. SWITZERLANDTOURISM

in top positions when it comes to innovation and both sides show strong will to create synergies. Already today, cooperation in various fields, such as design, architecture or green technologies, is very fruitful. The findings of a

high-ranking Swiss delegation on a recent visit to Japan have clearly shown that there is great potential for the further strengthening of our collaboration to reach one crucial common goal for our future: The promotion of energy

efficiency and a sustainable supply of energy. Even if our national policies regarding the future energy mix may differ, there is a recognized common need to seize the potential of renewable energies. Japan and Switzerland

have the ambition and the means to become frontrunners in that field, to the benefit of both the environment and our respective economies.

Regardless of their obvious differences in size and culture, our two countries share similarities that make cooperation easy and fruitful. It's well-known that we both strive for absolute precision, reliability and harmonious human relations. What is probably more surprising is the fact that in the field of international politics also, Japan and Switzerland are very close to each other. A recent study by the University of Geneva highlighted this by analyzing the positions our countries have taken in the United Nations General Assembly. Since Switzerland became a member of the U.N. 10 years ago, in 98 percent of the cases our countries voted the same way, thus promoting Japan to the position of most like-minded country with Switzerland. A truly encouraging perspective for the future strengthening of our relations!



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