

Austria | Austria national day

Common effort for peace, disarmament

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AMBASSADOR OF AUSTRIA

On the occasion of the national day of Austria, as the Ambassador of the Republic of Austria in Japan, I wish to send my sincere regards to the readers of The Japan Times.



I am very glad to be able to begin this article by writing that Austria and Japan traditionally consider each other like-minded and reliable partners. The scope and intensity of bilateral relations are at a very satisfactory level, be they in the cultural, commercial or political field.

Austria, as one of the host countries of the United Nations and as a member of the European Union, is actively seeking to contribute to international peace and stability. The 2014 Global Peace Index places Austria in third place. In our international efforts we appreciate Japan as an important partner and friend in many forums.

Nuclear weapons

Let me pick just one example where Austria and Japan do collaborate closely in aiming for a better world; disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use — on purpose or by accident —

remains real. It has been 69 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki and we are more than ever aware of the terrible consequences of nuclear explosions.

It is encouraging that in the past few years, more and more focus has been put on the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. International conferences devoted specifically to this issue took place in Norway and in Mexico. The government of Austria will host another conference on this issue in Vienna in December and we are grateful Japan has already committed to active participation.

Economic stimulus

Japan is a leading high-tech country, and we are consistently looking for ways to further enhance research and technological cooperation between our two countries. We are very glad and proud that this year's Honda Prize, one of Japan's most prestigious eco-technology awards, will be bestowed on Austrian researcher Helmut Clemens for his eminent achievements in the development of light-weight structural aluminides.

We are also confident that we will be able to further enhance cooperation with Japan in the area of renewable energy, such as biomass and other technologies where Austrian companies do have internationally recognized know-how.

Forestry and forest management are other areas where Japan and Austria have made headway in extending bilateral cooperation. Concrete projects in this area are underway with Nagano Prefec-



The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra performs at Suntory Hall under the baton of Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel during this year's Japan tour in September. © SUNTORY HALL

ture, where Gov. Shuichi Abe has included the ongoing cooperation with Austria in this year's government declaration.

With a bilateral trading volume of €3.1 billion per year, Japan is one of Austria's most important overseas trade partners. Austria's exports to Japan grew about 2.5 percent against the previous year. At the moment, about 100 Austrian companies have subsidiaries in Japan, while about 900 Austrian companies maintain business relations with Japan. Furthermore, Japan is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement — in conjunction with a Strategic Partnership Agreement — with the European Union, which I hope will come to an early conclusion and even further stimulate our bilateral relations.

Strong cultural bonds

Cultural exchange is one of the backbones of our relations with Japan. Many of the 200,000 Japanese tourists who travel to Austria every year visit my country with a view to exploring Austria's rich cultural heritage.

Only last month the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra successfully toured Japan. In 2011, the orchestra and their long-time Japanese partner Suntory Hall, set up a €2 million music education fund for the Tohoku region and the fund continues to provide support to various regional music education projects.

In November, Mozart will be at the center of an exhibition by the Mozarteum Foundation Salzburg, which will be hosted by Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co. and dedicated to the topic of "Mozart and the

violin." Prior to that, "Mozarthaus Wien" will organize concerts in Tokyo and Osaka. Japanese productions of the musicals "Mozart" and "Elisabeth" will be shown in Tokyo starting this month.

Austria attaches much importance to the commemoration of the outbreak of World War I 100 years ago, trying to focus on lessons to be learned by our societies today. Two Austrian projects will be devoted to this anniversary here in Japan. The first is an exhibition at Kobe University in November about the history of Aonogahara prison camp near Kobe where some 250 Austrian war prisoners were held during World War I. The other project is a theater program about Bertha von Suttner, specially adapted for Japan. Suttner, who died 100 years ago, was an Austrian peace activist and the first female peace Nobel laureate in 1905.

Guided by the idea of "East meets West" silent film treasures from Vienna will be presented at the National Film Centre, Tokyo in November with the participation of Japanese benshi (narrators) and Austrian silent film pianist Gerhard Gruber.

There is finally a community event to which I wish to draw your attention: The Austrian Embassy will host a charity Christmas market on Nov. 21, in cooperation with the "group of friends of the German language." I invite you, dear reader, to attend and to get a glimpse of Austria's famous Christmas traditions. It might even inspire you to come — or come again — to visit our country where old and new, tradition and innovation, mix so well.

所有する喜び。揺るぎない価値。
ウィーン金貨という資産。 ウィーン金貨 25th ANNIVERSARY 2014
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Greetings on the Austrian National Day

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