

# Norway National Day

## Deep collaboration across a broad variety of sectors

Erling Rimestad  
AMBASSADOR OF NORWAY

Today, Norwegians are in a particularly festive mood. Our celebration on May 17 is one of the world's oldest continuous traditions of marking a country's national day. We celebrate our constitution and independence not with military parades, but with parading children at center stage in what is a happy and unique celebration of peace.



Norway's constitution from 1814 embodies the principles of separation of powers and safeguarding the civil rights and sovereignty of the people. These are all cornerstones of modern democracies. Looking around the world today, we know that such values should not be taken for granted. Together we must continue to promote these values on the global scene.

On the very day of our celebrations, it is appropriate to highlight some key events and developments in the relations between Norway and Japan.

### Parliament president visit

One of the highlights in our bilateral exchange was the visit in March by the President of the

Norwegian parliament (Storting), Olemic Thommesen, and his vice presidents. H.E. Tadamoto Oshima, speaker of the House of Representatives kindly hosted the Norwegian delegation and the visit included meetings with His Majesty Emperor Akihito, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the president of the House of Councilors. Topics, including gender equality, maritime collaboration and science and research, were some of the issues touched upon during the meetings. Technology development was also on the agenda during the visit and the president experienced how robot technology can be used in the daily care of elderly people. The president also paid a visit to Hi-

roshima and Kyoto.

### Engaging the youth

2015 marked an important year in the battle against climate change. In Paris in December, nearly 200 countries finally reached a climate deal. Together with Japanese academic partners, the Norwegian embassy placed particular focus on climate change by organizing a climate essay contest for Japanese junior high and high school students, on the theme of "Together we can do even better." Three young contestants deeply impressed the judges with their insights and thoughts on climate change. I strongly believe in engaging the next generation in debating

how we can find solutions to our challenges. It is important that we involve them and listen to their concerns and solutions.

### Maritime partners

Japan and Norway have strong maritime traditions, and the maritime and shipping sector forms the backbone of the business relations between our two countries. In April, the Norwegian Vice Minister of Trade and Industry Dilek Ayhan was invited to Japan to deliver a speech during the Sea Japan maritime exhibition. The maritime businesses in our two countries understand the need for developing and investing in maritime technology that stimulates green growth for the maritime industry such as the use of environmental friendly technology and green fuels.

### Scientific collaboration

Another backbone in our bilateral relations is the collaboration in science, research and higher education. As a result of close collaboration over many years, Norwegian and Japanese research and academic institutions have developed solid partnerships. Increased research collaboration, including mobility between Norwegian higher education and research institutions and partnerships abroad, is a high priority for Norway. We want our future workforce to be prepared for the globalized labor market and we want our researchers to contribute in finding solutions to present and future challenges. Japan, with its strength in innovation, science and technology, is an important partner in finding sustainable solutions to the multitude of global challenges we are facing.

### Polar region progress

Collaboration in the polar regions is an important topic in the bilateral relations between Japan and Norway, and is a priority area under the agreement be-



Norwegian national day celebrations in front of the palace in Oslo HEGE M. KOLSHUS HANSEN  
— MFA NORWAY

tween Norway and Japan on cooperation in science and technology. With Japan as permanent observer on the Arctic Council and the Japanese Arctic Strategy being published last autumn, there are good opportunities for further strengthening these relations. One such initiative is the Japan-Norway Arctic Science and Innovation Week taking place in early June in Tokyo. This event will gather more than 250 representatives from research, higher education institutions and companies in Japan and Norway who will address major scientific challenges and discuss new opportunities in polar environments.

Let me conclude by mentioning that this year is also special as it has been five years since the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The recent earthquake in Kumamoto Prefecture reminded us how fragile we are in the face of natural disasters. Japan's initiative for a World Tsunami Day is important, as the day will be a reminder to the world community that natural disasters can strike anytime. Our thoughts are with the affected people of Kumamoto.



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**Elkem Japan K.K.**

Bosch Building Akasaka 8F,  
2-13-1, Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0014  
Tel: 03-3596-1051 Fax: 03-3596-1052  
<http://www.elkem.co.jp>

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