

France National Day

Working hand in hand on wide range of issues

LAURENT PIC
AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE



In a world of uncertainty, the exceptional partnership that links France and Japan is a significant contribution to international peace and security. Our two nations are shaped by the

same democratic values and are united by friendship and mutual respect. They also share a common vision of the world that lies on multilateralism and the respect of international law. Today more than ever, while we are facing tremendous challenges such as climate change, terrorism or regional tensions, we need France and Japan to join their efforts in order to promote democracy, openness and sustainable development for our planet.

Along with its partners in the EU, France is fully committed to these objectives. The

agreement in principle reached on EU-Japan economic and strategic partnership agreements is an important signal sent to the world. By electing Emmanuel Macron as their new president, the French people have also sent a powerful message of hope and confidence and expressed their support to openness rather than an inward-looking isolation. France and Europe have indeed been facing some serious challenges in recent years. But solutions have always been found. France wishes, together with Germany and its European partners, to further strengthen the EU to make it more efficient and able to face its international responsibilities.

This can only benefit our relationship with Japan, which is already wide ranging. Our two countries have developed over the recent years an exceptional partnership. Our respective leaders meet very regularly. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Paris in March. When he met the French president on the sidelines of the G-7 summit in May, he invited him to visit Japan. Our two-plus-two annual ministerial meetings allow our ministers

of foreign affairs and defense to reinforce our joint action in favor of world peace and security. Our coordination on economic and financial issues is closer than ever, through our high-level economic and financial dialogue. It works for our companies that have numerous and ambitious joint projects.

In the field of defense and security, the very high level of trust between France and Japan has made significant exchanges possible, as demonstrated by the recent visit to Japan of a command and force projection Mistral ship, followed by the first quadrilateral amphibious exercise along with the Self-Defense Forces, U.S. Marine Corps and British Royal Navy. The unprecedented presentation of the P1 maritime patrol aircraft built by Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd., at the French International Paris Air Show and the ongoing negotiation of a bilateral acquisition and cross-servicing agreement that will increase the interoperability between our forces, are additional examples of what we can do to expand further our security cooperation in various areas, including space, cybersecurity and

maritime surveillance.

The development of our relationship also relies on the mutual understanding and attraction that have been inspiring French and Japanese for so many years. Culture is a powerful driver as more than 430,000 people visited the exhibition organized in Tokyo earlier this year on Marie-Antoinette and Versailles. Additionally, we just celebrated the 25th anniversary of the French Film Festival in Japan. Several French actors such as Catherine Deneuve and Isabelle Huppert came on that occasion and met with their Japanese fans. Science brings us together as well as the prestigious 2017 Japan Prize honored Emmanuelle Charpentier for her work on DNA editing.

In recent years, the growing numbers of French visiting Japan and Japanese visiting France have also strengthened the bonds that unite our people. France is happy and proud to welcome more Japanese tourists and dedicated to ensure their safe travel. We were also delighted that our wonderful friend Kumamon was named a sightseeing and goodwill ambassador to France to visit France's tourist



President Emmanuel Macron (right) and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hold bilateral talks on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in Taormina, Italy, on May 26. AFP-JJJI

destinations this year, including such famous places as Paris and Mont Saint-Michel.

France and Japan are two innovative and ambitious countries that intend to share their energy with the rest of the world. Japan will host the 2020 Olympic Games and France is hoping to host the 2024 edition. Today, we celebrate the French national day and honor the founding principles of our republic: liberty, equality and fraternity. But we also celebrate this spirit of conquest, optimism and boldness that both

French and Japanese people value.

2018 will be a great year for the Franco-Japanese relationship and friendship. We will celebrate the 160th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic ties and "Japonismes," an exceptional display of Japanese arts and traditions in France, is under preparation. All this will pave the way for an even closer partnership between our countries, as well as one that is more intense, ambitious and forward looking. I wish you all a very happy 14th of July!



Kumamon, the official black bear mascot of Kumamoto Prefecture, rides a bicycle near Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy on July 4. The popular Japanese character was designated as a sightseeing and goodwill ambassador to France for fiscal 2017. EVALERE / CRT NORMANDIE



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