

Austria National Day Special

Economic progress further enhances relations

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AMBASSADOR OF AUSTRIA



As ambassador of the Republic of Austria to Japan, I am delighted to convey my best wishes to the readers of The Japan Times on the solemn occasion of Austria's National Day.

On July 1, Austria took over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union for the third time after 1998 and 2006. With our presidency, we put forward a substantive, progressive agenda guided by the motto "A Europe that protects." Whereas the state of world affairs has not been short of challenges and problems in the last years and months, we can ascertain considerable progress in the relations between European and Asian nations. From an EU point of view, I would like to highlight the signing of the strategic partnership agreement, as well as the economic partnership agreement between the European Union and Japan, done at the 25th EU-

Japan Summit on July 17 in Tokyo.

This is a considerable achievement that has been six years in the making in terms of the duration of the negotiations. Together, the EU and Japan account for 30 percent of global gross domestic product and 37 percent of world trade. Once the agreement enters into force, expected during the course of 2019, almost all existing tariffs will be eliminated between the EU and Japan.

The Austrian presidency is striving for global stability and security; the EU is playing its role by engaging in constant dialogue with major powers whose strategic interests diverge and place emphasis on enhancing cooperation with those countries that share many European values and interests.

For this purpose, Austria promotes a vivid dialogue between Europe and Asia in the framework of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. As the first major event in the immediate lead-up to our presidency, Vienna hosted an ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting on June 28–29, preparing for the 12th ASEM Summit that took place on Oct. 18–19 in Brussels. The participants engaged in discussions on how to advance cooperation under the overall theme of "Global Partners for Global Challenges."

Just like EU-Japan relations, the wider European-Asian cooperation in the framework of ASEM has huge potential, both politically and economically. In the latter field, a glance at the numbers is most impressive, as ASEM nations account for 60 percent of the world's population, 60 percent of world trade and 60 percent of global gross domestic product.

At the end of October, the passage of time is apparent in this short semester as our EU presidency will conclude by the end of the year. In 2019, however, Austria and Japan will focus on further improving our excellent bilateral relations, as the nations will celebrate the 150-year anniversary of the establishment of official relations. On Oct. 18, 1869, the then-Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Empire of Japan concluded the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, setting the basis for an enduring friendship and cooperation, developing over time across virtually every field imaginable. Nowadays, our like-mindedness is visible in many fields. Political relations are outstanding and from an economic point of view, bilateral trade, tourism and innovation are growing. Our countries are also benefiting from their respective roles in the global economy — Japan as the world's third-largest economy, Austria as a prosperous market in the heart of Europe with access to neighboring countries.

When it comes to cultural, scientific and people-to-people relations, words can hardly describe the cultural treasures and intellectual potential rooted in both our countries. As ambassador of Austria, I feel honored to experience such a mutual interest in and appreciation of one another's culture.

The fact that All Nippon Airways will launch a new daily nonstop route from Tokyo's Haneda airport to Vienna International Airport from Feb. 17, 2019, is a most welcome contribution to the strengthening of the ties between Austria and Japan. Vienna is of course known as the historical

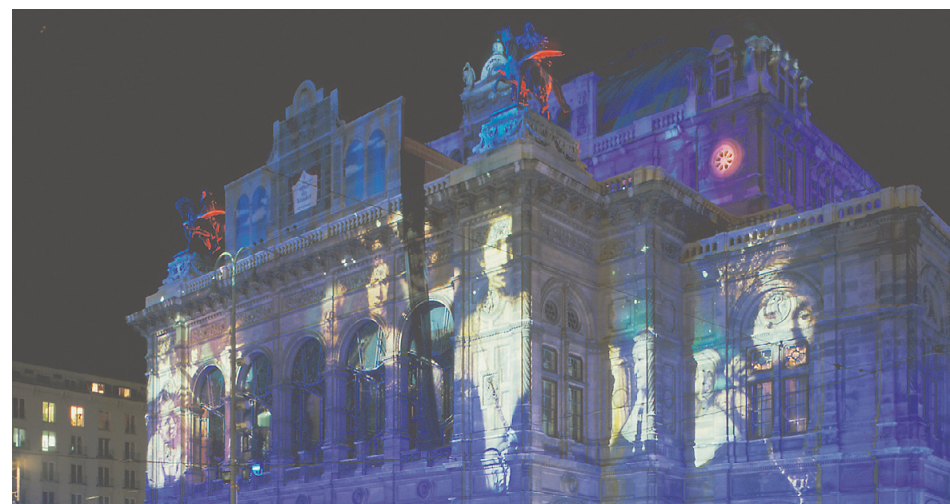
and geographical gateway to Central and Eastern Europe and was recently ranked as the most livable city in the world — we look forward to welcoming even more business travelers and tourists.

I am convinced that next year's anniversary will further deepen and strengthen our excellent relations and our friendship.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



Dachstein Mountains in the Northern Limestone Alps. OSTERREICH WERBUNG / HOMBERGER



The Vienna State Opera house built in 1869. OSTERREICH WERBUNG / VIENNASLIDE

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Greetings on the Austrian National Day

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