

Norway National Day Special

Shared ideals form strong relations

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AMBASSADOR OF NORWAY



May 17 is Norway's Constitution Day. In 1814, it was one of the most liberal constitutions the world had seen. Today, it remains the foundation of Norway's liberal and modern democratic society

as the second-oldest constitution in the world still in use.

Our Constitution Day celebrations are traditionally festive and playful. We gather family and friends and enjoy the day dressed in our finest clothes or national costumes, with songs, children's parades and brass bands, words on our past and hopes for the future, all of it followed by games and good food. We have celebrated May 17 this way for 150 years.

As last year, this year's celebrations will be muted, and with the COVID-19 pandemic setting our national values in sharp relief, the

importance of democracy, the rule of law, freedom of expression and a welfare system available to all will be highlighted.

This year we also celebrate the bicentennial of the Norwegian flag. Eighteen proposals were put before the Norwegian parliament, and in May 1821 the red, white and blue flag was chosen, similar to the Latin cross design of the Danish and Swedish flags, but in the new colors of freedom. The flag and constitution remained strong symbols of Norwegian identity and independence throughout the 19th century union with Sweden, beyond Norway's full independence in 1905 and during World War II.

Norway and Japan are mountainous countries close to the sea. Our highly educated peoples share a deep affection for the natural environment and seek to protect the livelihoods of our rural communities. Both countries cherish democracy, rule of law and human rights. Together, we promote a sustainable ocean economy, Arctic cooperation, global health and the maintenance of international cooperation, peace and security.



Staff of the Norwegian Embassy in traditional clothing. NORWEGIAN EMBASSY IN TOKYO

Norway and Japan share a number of economic priorities as well, in the fields of energy, maritime transport, marine resources, innovation and research. Our common ambition is to transform our economies to usher in a low-emissions future in accordance with the Paris Agreement. We face similar demographic challenges, as our populations grow older and human resources become scarcer. Both countries depend on innovation, techno-



In normal times, schoolchildren from all over Oslo parade by the Royal Palace to greet the royal family on May 17. ASGEIR HELGESTAD/VISITNORWAY.COM

logical development and strong partnerships to reach our goals.

Norway and Japan work together to ensure a clear voice for minorities and indigenous peoples, and to promote gender diversity and equality. Our cultural exchanges in performing arts, literature, visual arts and music continue to expand, despite today's limitations on travel and personal contact.

This past year of Norway-Japan relations could have been a story of lockdowns and standstills. I am relieved and proud to note that this is not our story.

Instead, Norway and Japan can enjoy further innovation-oriented development of our bilateral relations, working together toward a sustainable future for our societies and the world. There is no better way to frame a day of national celebration!

Gratulerer med dagen!

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

Congratulations on Norwegian Constitution Day

 Mitsubishi Corporation