

Iceland National Day Special

Relations grow from strength to strength

STEFAN HAUKUR JOHANNESON
AMBASSADOR OF ICELAND



Today is the 77th anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Iceland. And this year we also celebrate the 20th anniversary of the reciprocal opening of the Icelandic Embassy in

Tokyo and the Japanese Embassy in Reykjavik. The establishment of the embassies marked the beginning of a new chapter in our bilateral relationship, which has gone from strength to strength and is characterized by mutual friendship and respect.

The opening of the embassies saw an immediate escalation of political dialogue between our countries — best crystallized by the frequent high-level visits in the early 2000s. In 2003, with the support of the Scandinavia-Japan Sasakawa Foundation, the University of Iceland established Iceland's first undergraduate program in Japanese studies, which has for many years been the second-most popular foreign studies program at the university. The same year also saw the establishment of the Icelandic Chamber of Commerce in Japan, further strengthening the important business ties between our countries.

Iceland and Japan share a vision for an

open and rules-based global economy built to the highest standards. For both of our countries it is vitally important to safeguard the institutions and agreements that have enabled us to promote international trade and cooperation for the benefit of our peoples' prosperity.

To this effect, it continues to be a key priority for Iceland in Japan to deepen economic relations between our countries. A future trade agreement, which would include the elimination of technical barriers and tariffs, would, no doubt, boost our economic cooperation and deepen our partnership in other fields.

We look forward to resuming promotion of Icelandic tourism to the Japanese public in the hopefully near future. Japanese tourists have been delighted to visit Iceland, mainly during the winter months when the magnificent northern lights can be seen. Now there is a new spectacle to witness in the ongoing volcanic eruption at Geldingadalir, close to our international airport at Keflavik. We are hoping that future direct commercial flights between our countries will further strengthen our bilateral relationship through trade, people-to-people contacts and, of course, tourism and cultural exchange.

In recent years, cooperation with Japan on arctic issues, which is a key foreign policy issue for Iceland, has grown ever closer due to Japan's active interest and observation role in the Arctic Council.

This past month saw the Third Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3) meeting cohosted by Iceland and Japan take place in Tokyo. At the meeting, Lilja Dogg Alfreðsdóttir, our minister of education, science and culture, with Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Koichi Hagiuda signed a memorandum of cooperation on education, science, technology and innovation, which will encourage joint research in areas of common interest.

ASM3 was held in the context of Iceland's two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which ended with a high-level ministerial meeting in Reykjavik on May 20 — when the delegates signed the Reyk-

javik Declaration and adopted the council's first-ever strategic plan, which will guide its work for the next decade.

Gender equality, which is another key policy focus for Iceland, was reflected in Iceland's Arctic Council Chairmanship program. This, too, is a thematic area that Iceland and Japan are working ever closer on. Research and experience shows that gender equality is an important element for achieving true sustainable development and for the creation of more resilient, equitable and happier societies.

This will be of key importance when countries start building back better and greener after COVID-19, and Iceland is



deeply committed to its Paris Agreement obligations and determined to reach carbon neutrality by 2040. Here as well, we believe there are great opportunities for collaboration between Iceland and Japan, not least when it comes to the development of clean and sustainable energy resources.

During this anniversary year, the

Embassy of Iceland looks forward to celebrating our strong connection with Japan and our deepening engagement on issues of global importance.

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



Volcanic eruption at Geldingadalir
EMBASSY OF ICELAND IN JAPAN

Congratulations on the Occasion of the Icelandic National Day



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ISCCJ

Icelandic Chamber of Commerce in Japan
在日アイスランド商工会議所

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