

Remarks by H.E. Mr. SUGIYAMA Akira,
Ambassador of Japan to Norway,
at the Reception to Celebrate
the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
at the Embassy of Japan in Norway on 13th February 2025

H.E. Ms. Kristina Sigurdottir Hansen, State Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries
and Ocean Policy,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

God dag. こんにちは。

I would like to cordially welcome all the distinguished guests today to the reception to celebrate the 65th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. With the blessing of the distinguished guests, I would like to sincerely wish for the continued health and happiness of His Majesty the Emperor, the shared prosperity of the Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of Norway, and ever-lasting friendship between Japan and Norway.

Japan and Norway have been enjoying a long history of friendship supported by close exchanges between the Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of Norway and share fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. When Prime Minister Støre visited Japan in December 2023, the then Prime Minister of Japan Kishida and Prime Minister Støre agreed to elevate our bilateral relationship to Strategic Partnership.

In 2024, Japan and Norway made good progress in consolidating our Strategic Partnership.

First, I am pleased to note that the political and security dialogue and cooperation between our two countries were further strengthened.

Last September, the then Defense Minister Gram visited Japan and exchanged

views with his counterpart on the regional security situation and the defense policies and agreed to further strengthen defense dialogue and cooperation, including defense material cooperation. We also appreciate the visit of Mr. Kravik, State Secretary for Foreign Minister to Japan last June to further strengthen our political dialogue on bilateral and global issues. I am delighted to mention that Mr. Kravik was back in Japan last week. In addition to another excellent exchange of views on our partnership, State Secretary Kravik participated in the Japan-NATO Conference on Strategic Communications and co-chaired the Women, Peace, and Security Focal Points Network Meeting.

Japan and Norway share the view that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and the security of the Indo-Pacific are inseparable. We stand together with Norway in continued support for the people of Ukraine to achieve a just and lasting peace. Japan will further strengthen partnership with NATO. I would like to note with appreciation that the Embassy of Norway in Tokyo, together with the Embassy of Romania, will serve as NATO's "contact point embassy" to facilitate our relations with NATO. We appreciate increased Norwegian interest and engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and welcome the deployment of a Norwegian Navy frigate to the Indo-Pacific for the first time this year, joining the UK Carrier Strike Group.

Distinguished guests,

Japan-Norway economic relations have seen steady development in green transition, maritime business and seafood trade, among others.

Since Japan and Norway are both maritime nations, our two countries are close partners in maritime, fishery and seafood sectors. In this connection, I would like to express deep gratitude to Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy, Ms. Næss for her visit to Japan last June, which further boosted the longstanding cooperation in these important sectors.

Japan and Norway agreed to establish "Green Strategic Partnership" in December 2023. This partnership has shown good development in the increased collaborations

between Japanese and Norwegian companies in offshore wind, hydrogen and ammonia, batteries, and CCUS, among others. I would like to highlight one significant example. Parkwind, which is wholly owned by JERA, Japanese energy company, is participating as part of Ventyr consortium in Sørlige Nordsjø II, the first major offshore wind power project in the Norwegian continental shelf. If you have interest in this project, you can visit the Parkwind booth downstairs.

Norway has been contributing to the energy security of Europe through stable oil and gas supply. For many years Japanese companies have been playing a significant role in Norway's oil and gas exploration and production, including by supplying high quality steel products used for drilling and pipelines.

This year, Japan will host the World EXPO in Osaka. We highly appreciate Norway's active participation in the EXPO. This will provide a golden opportunity to showcase Norway to the Japanese people and to further strengthen economic ties between Japan and Norway. I strongly hope that Norway will send a delegation of leading businesspersons on this occasion to explore further business opportunities in Japan, including investment. Given Japan's potential of economic growth boosted by the recent record-high capital investment, Japan can provide ample investment opportunities for Norway. You can find further information on the EXPO downstairs today.

If you go downstairs, in addition to Parkwind and EXPO I have just mentioned, you can find information on Norsonic, one of the world's leading manufacturers of measurement equipment in acoustics and vibrations. And Toyota Norge displays the flagship model of Lexus EV outside. I highly appreciate all their contributions.

Distinguished guests,

Needless to say, mutual understanding through people-to-people exchanges is the essential foundation of the enduring bond between Japan and Norway. Since I came to Oslo one year ago, I have been witnessing Norwegian friends' great interest in Japanese culture on the occasions of the Japanese festivals held in Kampen area and Tveten Gård in Oslo, the traditional Noh-performance at the Drammen Museum and the

screening of Japanese films at “Films from the South”, to name a few. I am pleased to note that tourism between Japan and Norway is growing and the number of Norwegians visiting Japan is on the rise and surpassed the pre-pandemic level last year. If you are interested in traveling to Japan, you can go downstairs for the booths of JNTO, Japan National Tourism Organization, All Nippon Airways, and Japan Airlines. I would like to thank JNTO, ANA and JAL for their participation. I should not forget to invite you to taste Awa Sake, sparkling sake, which Japan Awasake Association kindly sent us just last week.

The year 2024 has become a memorable year that many people will surely talk about for years to come. Nihon Hidankyo received the Nobel Peace Prize last December for their efforts of many years to eliminate nuclear weapons and to promote understanding of the realities of nuclear weapons use. It is also a great honor for Japan. The Government of Japan is determined to promote a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the realities of nuclear weapons use across generations and borders, and to continue unceasing efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

Last but not least, this year 2025, Japan and Norway celebrate the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. We are proud of the fact that Japan is one of the first countries that established diplomatic relations with Norway as early as on the 7th of November in 1905. Seizing this opportunity, we are arranging commemorative events with our Norwegian friends and Japanese residents in Norway this year. You can find the event calendar on the Embassy’s homepage. Please have a look and join the events that are of interest to you.

Now, I would like to invite you to raise your glasses,

- to congratulate His Majesty the Emperor’s 65th Birthday,
- to wish His Majesty the King and the people of Norway peace and happiness,
- to wish for the further development of Japan-Norway friendly relations,
- and to wish health and prosperity for all present here,

Kanpai. Skål. Tusen takk. Enjoy the afternoon.