

23 May 2025

Distinguished guests,

God dag, こんにちは. Thank you for coming to my residence today.

On April 13th, the Osaka Kansai EXPO 2025 finally started. As of May 17<sup>th</sup>, last Saturday, more than 3.7 million people visited the exhibition.

Japan highly appreciates Norway's active participation in the Expo and I am pleased to note that the Nordic Circle, for which Norway has been playing a pivotal role, is one of the most popular pavilions at the EXPO and about 10% of visitors to the EXPO enjoy the Nordic Circle every day. The popularity of The Nordic Circle clearly shows that the beautiful nature and culture of Norway and the other Nordic countries as well as the Nordic Circle's themes such as the green transition & circular economies, lifestyle & well-being and mobility & connectivity attract many visitors to EXPO, including Japanese citizens. These very timely themes resonate with the EXPO's aim, that is, co-creation of a sustainable society with the international community, encouraging everyone to consider the way of life they desire, and achieve a society where everyone can fully realize their potential.

Norway celebrated National Day, the Constitution Day, last Saturday. I was touched by the very lively Children's Parade in front of the Palace and, of course, enjoyed ice cream. In just ten days, Norway will celebrate another National Day, this time in Osaka on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. We are very pleased that Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, State Secretary to the Minister of Trade and Industry, Ragnhild Sjoner Syrstad as well as high-level representatives of some of most respected Norwegian companies will visit Japan on this occasion. On behalf of the Government of Japan, let me extend a very warm welcome to the Norwegian delegation, including those present here.

As we understand, on the National Day, in addition to exciting cultural events, there is a Japan-Business Dialogue at the Nordic Pavillion. And on the next day, business seminars are planned in Tokyo. I strongly hope that these dialogue and seminars will provide you with excellent opportunities to further strengthen partnership between Japanese and Norwegian businesspersons in promising areas, including renewable energy, maritime sector, space, pharmaceuticals, and seafood.

I would also like to recommend that you visit leading Japanese companies' pavilions in the EXPO, where you can see the next-generation communications infrastructure, future society beyond carbon neutrality, future food and health care and more. You would also like to visit the Japan Pavilion, the pavilion of the Government of Japan, which features biogas power generation using food waste from the Expo site and other cutting-edge Japanese carbon recycling technologies. These visits may give you ideas for developing new business opportunities with Japan.

This year 2025, Japan and Norway celebrate the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Our two countries have a long history of friendly and cordial relations and we are now Strategic Partners with shared fundamental values and principles, including democracy, human rights, rule of law and open market. Of course, solid business partnerships are vital foundations for our bilateral relationship. We believe that the Norwegian delegation's visit to the Expo will be one of the highlights to commemorate this milestone year.

This gathering is a reception to sort of launch Norway's delegation. Please enjoy some Japanese food and sparkling sake to prepare yourself for Japan trip. I'm happy to note that State Secretary Syrstad will join us later.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to those who contributed to Norway's participation in the Osaka Kansai Expo and organizing this delegation visit and business seminar in Osaka and Tokyo, particularly Innovation Norway.

I would like to close my remarks by wishing you a enjoyable and successful visit to Japan.

Thank you very much for your attention. Enjoy!

—end of the speech—