

令和 7 年度春の外国人叙勲伝達式 大使挨拶
ストルテンベルグ財務相／前 NATO 事務総長

His Excellency Mr. Jens Stoltenberg,
Distinguished guests,

God dag.

It is my great honor and pleasure to host the conferment ceremony for HE Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, who was awarded Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun in the spring this year. This decoration is the highest honor bestowed on foreign nationals who have rendered distinguished service in promoting friendship and goodwill with Japan. Mr. Stoltenberg was awarded this Order for his outstanding contribution to strengthening relations between Japan and NATO as NATO Secretary General, as well as to further promoting friendly relations between Japan and Norway.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Stoltenberg and his family.

Under the leadership of Mr. Stoltenberg as NATO Secretary General, the Japan-NATO relationship made great progress. In his insightful book “On My Watch,” which I enjoyed reading very much, Mr. Stoltenberg emphasizes the need to cooperate more closely with partner countries like Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea to defend the norms and institutions that have characterized the international community since World War II, and said “the challenge we face are global, so it (is) imperative we continue to strengthen our global partnership.” We believe that we owe a lot to this conviction of Mr. Stoltenberg and his actions based on it for the deepening relations between NATO and IP4, particularly Japan, founded on the shared understanding that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable. Indeed, during his tenure as Secretary General, Japan’s Prime Minister was invited to NATO summits for three consecutive years since 2022.

We highly appreciate Mr. Stoltenberg’s commitment to establishing a framework for furthering practical cooperation between Japan and NATO. In 2023, on the occasion of the Vilnius NATO Summit, Mr. Stoltenberg and the then Prime Minister Kishida agreed upon the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP), an upgraded cooperation document between Japan and NATO, which identifies 16 areas of cooperation. At the Washington Summit last year, NATO and IP4 launched “flagship projects,” namely support to Ukraine, cyber defense, countering disinformation and technology. I am pleased to share with you that, as part of “flagship projects,” Japan hosted Japan-NATO Conference

**There might have been changes on delivery.*

on Strategic Communication in Tokyo last February. All these achievements would not have been possible without Secretary General Stoltenberg's strong initiative and persistent efforts. His work contributed to elevating our cooperative relationship to new heights. Reflecting such a dramatic development of our cooperation, during the Secretary General Stoltenberg's term, Japan started to work on the establishment of the independent Mission of Japan to NATO, which was inaugurated at the beginning of this year. I would like to add that we thank Norway for its significant cooperation as a NATO Contact Point Embassy in Japan, together with Romania.

This year marks the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Norway. We would like to express heartfelt gratitude for Mr. Stoltenberg's contribution to further strengthening the long-time cordial relations between our two countries in wide-ranging areas. The highlight during his tenure as Prime Minister was his visit to Japan in November 2012. As one of the concrete results, Japan and Norway agreed to introduce a working holiday program to promote youth exchange. Also, during the summit meeting, Prime Minister Stoltenberg expressed strong support for Japan's observer status in the Arctic Council, contributing to its approval in 2013. I should also stress that, under his premiership, the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Maritime Technology and Industry was concluded in May 2011, paving the way for further collaboration between our two countries as maritime nations.

Moreover, we remember, with deep appreciation, how Norway under Mr. Stoltenberg's leadership helped us following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Prime Minister Stoltenberg immediately expressed his condolences and visited our Embassy to sign the condolence book. Subsequently, Norway established "the Women's Leadership Fund for Recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake" and "the Norway Tohoku Recovery Fund," extending cooperation in the empowerment of women and the recovery of the fisheries industry in the disaster-stricken area. Furthermore, Norway exported LNG to Japan in response to the increased demand for LNG following the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident.

On this commemorative occasion, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations and profound respect to HE Mr. Jens Stoltenberg for his remarkable accomplishments, which have been recognized through the conferment of Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun. I sincerely hope that Minister Stoltenberg will continue to lend his wisdom and support to further promote the Japan-NATO relations and to continue to help deepen mutual understanding and friendship between Japan

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and Norway.

Gratulerer Jens, og Tusen takk!

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