

H.E. Mr. Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, State Secretary for Minister of Foreign Affairs,
H.E. Mr. Andreas Flåm, State Secretary for Minister of Defense,
H.E. Ms. Kristina Sigurdottir Hansen, State Secretary for Minister of Fisheries and
Ocean Policy,
General Eirik Kristoffersen, Chief of Defense
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

God dag. こんにちは。

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all today to the reception to celebrate the 66th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. With your warm blessing, 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 the ever-lasting friendship between Japan and Norway.

Japan and Norway are strategic partners sharing fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Last year, our two countries celebrated the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, and further strengthened our strategic partnership in wide-ranging areas.

First, I would like to emphasize that the political and security dialogue and cooperation, which is an important pillar of our strategic partnership, made good progress last year. State Secretary Kravik and Foreign Minister Eide visited Japan in February and in June respectively, and had very productive meetings with their counterparts, covering multi-faceted aspects of our relationship. In addition, our Parliamentary Vice Minister of Defense Mr. Kobayashi came to Norway in April and State Secretary Flåm visited Japan in August to deepen dialogue on defense and security cooperation.

Amid an increasingly challenging security environment, Japan and Norway share the view that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable. From this standpoint, Japan firmly supports the vigorous efforts by Ukraine, European countries, and the United States toward achieving a just and lasting peace. Japan is participating in the Coalition of the Willing meetings and extending assistance to

Ukraine in the areas of financial support, de-mining, and winterization, among others.

We highly appreciate Norway's growing interest and engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. In this connection, I would like to highlight the deployment of Norwegian frigate KNM Roald Amundsen to the Indo-Pacific, joining the UK Carrier Strike Group last summer. The Norwegian frigate called at Tokyo and Yokosuka ports, and participated in joint exercises with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force. Furthermore, I am pleased that, on that historic occasion, State Secretary of Defense Flåm, Chief of Defense General Kristoffersen, Chief of the Joint Headquarters Vice Admiral Andersen, and Chief of the Navy Rear Admiral Berdal visited Japan.

Japan is strengthening partnership with NATO, thanks to the help of Norway and Romania, both currently serving as NATO's "contact point embassy" in Tokyo. In this connection, we believe that Japan owes it a lot to the leadership of Mr. Jens Stoltenberg as then NATO Secretary General for the deepening partnership between Japan and NATO. To express deep appreciation for this outstanding contribution, last spring, the Government of Japan conferred on Finance Minister Stoltenberg "Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun," which is the highest honor bestowed upon foreign nationals in the name of HM the Emperor.

Distinguished guests,

The EXPO 2025, Osaka, Kansai was a great success. I highly appreciate Norway's enthusiastic participation through the Nordic Pavilion, named "Nordic Circle" which attracted more than 1.66 million visitors. The Expo also provided a valuable platform for deepening business cooperation between our two countries. A number of prestigious Norwegian companies sent delegations to Japan for this occasion and produced concrete results, including signing of MOUs on offshore wind and space development.

"Green Strategic Partnership," which was agreed to between Japan and Norway in 2023, has shown good progress in business collaborations in Green Transition. We congratulate the successful start of "Northern Lights," the world's first commercial CCS project. I am pleased to note that Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha or K-Line, one of the major Japanese shipping companies, has been contributing to this project through providing liquified CO2 transportation by ships. Furthermore, K-Line and Mitsui O.S.K. Lines will also join cross-border transportation of CO2 for the next phase of the project. For

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further information, please visit the K-LINE's booth downstairs.

There are emerging areas for business cooperation between Japan and Norway. Last June, under the chair of State Secretary Kravik, Japan and Norway held a round table discussion on AI on the sideline of the Internet Governance Forum. The maritime sector, a traditional area of business cooperation, is no exception. 29 Japanese companies participated in the Nor-shipping exhibition 2025, showcasing their next-generation technologies such as ammonia-fueled ships and autonomous ships.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Takaichi, Japan promotes public-private investment and cooperation in strategically important areas, including AI, energy, ocean, and space. Our Embassy is ready to help those exploring such business opportunities to further strengthen economic ties between Japan and Norway.

Distinguished guests,

Last year, with the generous support of the Japanese community in Norway and our many Norwegian friends, we proudly celebrated the 120th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations, through around sixty commemorative events, which showcased both traditional and modern Japanese cultures, including Ukiyo-e, ikebana, tea ceremony, films, manga and anime, to name a few. I should add that there were also several events to promote tourism or scientific cooperation between our two countries. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my sincere appreciation to everyone who helped make this celebration such a success.

I should also mention the visit of Mr. Murakami Haruki, a world-renowned Japanese author to the Lillehammer Literature Festival, the amazing performance of Mr. Tsujii Nobuyuki, a world-famous Japanese pianist with the Oslo Philharmonic, and the Awarding of the Abel Prize, one of the most prestigious international prizes in mathematics named after a Norwegian mathematic genius, to Professor Masaki Kashiwara of the Kyoto University. These events also made the year 2025 an unforgettable one.

I am pleased to note that we saw a record-high number of tourists visited Japan last year, totaling about 43 million. The number of Norwegian friends visiting Japan is also steadily increasing and broke its record with about 29,000 in 2024. Today, you can find useful travel information at the booths of Japan National Tourism Organization, All Nippon Airways, and Japan Airlines.

I should not forget to invite you to taste Awa Sake or sparkling sake. Mr. Ito from Japan Awasake Association will help us taste sparkling sake today at his booth downstairs. Rannei Sake—the only sake brewery in the Nordic countries—also introduces their local products.

Distinguished guests,

The close exchange between the Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of Norway is the foundation of the long history of friendship between our two countries. The Royal Court recently announced that His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Haakon will visit Japan in June this year. We are greatly honored by this Royal visit, which will surely contribute to further deepening the cordial and friendly relationship between Japan and Norway.

To conclude, together with all of you, I look forward to strengthening the bridge between our two countries and making 2026 a year filled with warm friendship, mutual understanding, close cooperation, and many shared smiles.

And, last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues of the Embassy for all the preparations and JNTO, Japan Awasake Association, ANA, JAL, K-LINE, and Rannei Sake for their participation.

Tusen takk. Thank you very much. どうもありがとうございます。