

Constitution Day of Denmark

PUBLICITY

Denmark, Japan building sustainable future

By Peter Taksøe-Jensen

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark to Japan

Today, it is my great honor and privilege to address you on the occasion of Denmark's Constitution Day. This day holds a special place in the hearts of Danes worldwide as we commemorate the signing of our constitution on June 5, 1849, during the late Edo period in Japan. This year is especially significant as we mark the 175th anniversary. It is a day that symbolizes Denmark's transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, laying the foundation for the modern Danish democracy. Before 1849, the king wielded significant power, but the growing demand for democratic governance led to a peaceful transition that fundamentally reshaped our political landscape while retaining the monarchy as a symbol of the people and the country. This peaceful transition to democracy was a rarity and is a testament to our strong commitment to democratic values, consensus-building, and peaceful conflict resolution, which have become hallmarks of Danish society.

The 1849 Constitution introduced a bicameral parliamentary system, freedom of the press, and civil liberties. It was a pioneering document that influenced democratic movements in neighboring nations. Over the years, the Constitution has undergone several amendments, reflecting our evolving society while strengthening the core values of democracy and human rights. Since then, Denmark has remained steadfast in our democratic values. Our commitment to free speech, free press, and individual liberties has fostered an environment where diverse voices can be heard. I am proud that Denmark continues to be a frontrunner in upholding democratic values, and I am heartened to see an increasing number of people and nations sharing and advancing these values over the last 175 years.

Constitution Day is not just a celebration of historical events but also a reaffirmation of our dedication to the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring legacy of our Constitution and the freedoms it guarantees, as Danes come together to reflect on our collective journey and renew our commitment to the values that define us as a nation. Constitution Day fosters a deeper appreciation of



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our civic responsibilities and the importance of safeguarding our democratic institutions for future generations.

Celebrating Japan-Denmark relations

As we celebrate this occasion, it is also an opportune moment to reflect on our strong and enduring relationship with Japan, which is also a constitutional monarchy and an ardent supporter of democratic values. Our diplomatic ties date back to 1867, when the two countries signed the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation during the reign of Christian IX and the last shogun Yoshinobu. With Japan modernizing the entire nation, our ties have flourished, particularly through initiatives that connect us more closely. Examples include the communication cables connecting the Eurasian Continent and the Japanese archipelago laid by a Danish company in the early 20th century, and the first direct flight route connecting Europe and Japan over the Arctic.

The Strategic Partnership agreed upon by Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2014 was a significant milestone in deepening bilateral relations, based on mutual respect and shared values, namely democracy, freedom, and the rule of law enshrined in both the Danish and Japanese constitutions. The joint statement issued by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in 2023 advanced this strategic partnership, encompassing tangible cooperation in fields such as trade, investment, culture, education, gender equality, digitalization, and innovation.

Our ties have blossomed, driven not only by bilateral cooperation but also by our joint efforts in addressing some of the most pressing global issues of our time. Today, we stand as partners, collaborating to tackle challenges and promote sustainable development, with a commitment to environmental protection and combating climate change. Japan's effort to understand the mechanism of global warming, particularly by climate and geological survey in Greenland is just an example. As we move forward, our partnership will continue to evolve, driven by a steadfast dedication to building a greener, more sustainable, and equitable future for all.

Bilateral relations everywhere

The mutual respect and understanding that form the basis of Denmark and Japan's relationship are exemplified through numerous bilateral initiatives. The presence of Danish companies in Japan has grown, particularly in sectors such as food products, pharmaceuticals, and re-



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Christiansborg Slotsplads Canal in Copenhagen near Christiansborg which is the seat of the Parliament of Denmark, the Parliament, the Supreme Court and the Prime Minister.

newable energy. Similarly, Japanese businesses have made significant investments in Denmark, contributing to our economy and creating jobs.

One notable example of our recent economic collaboration is in the field of renewable energy. Denmark is a global leader in wind energy, and we have been working closely with Japan to share our expertise and technology as Japan seeks to enhance its energy security and efficiency. Today, Japanese companies are actively involved in Danish energy projects, and there is significant potential for further collaboration.

Innovation and technology are also at the forefront of our bilateral relationship. Denmark and Japan share a commitment to innovation, and our collaboration in this field has yielded remarkable results. Both countries are leaders in emerging technologies, such as quantum technology, and are actively seeking to strengthen our cooperation further. Both Denmark and Japan are at the forefront of digital innovation, and there is significant potential for collaboration in this field. By sharing best practices and technological advancements, we can drive digital transformation in various sectors, including healthcare, education, and public services.

One area of significant cooperation is healthcare technology. Danish companies are known for their innovative solutions in medical devices and pharmaceuticals, and they are collaborating with Japanese counterparts to develop new treatments and technologies that improve patient care. This partnership is particularly relevant in the context of an aging global population, where innovative healthcare solutions are essential, as well as in mitigating the increasing cost of healthcare and welfare.

We have fostered rich cultural exchanges, building mutual understanding of our traditions. The cultural affinities between Denmark and Japan are celebrated through various events, exhibitions, and initiatives that promote mutual understanding and appreciation. For years, Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales have delighted Japanese audiences, while Japanese art forms like anime have devoted Danish fans. Both simple and sophisticated Danish and Japanese designs have influenced each other and gained popularity worldwide.

In addition, cultural diplomacy continues to play a vital role in strengthening the bonds between Denmark and Japan. Festivals, art exhibitions, and literary events provide platforms for our peoples to connect on a personal level, fostering a deeper appreciation of each other's cultural heritage. Danish orchestras performing in Tokyo or Japanese tea ceremonies held in Copenhagen are more than just events; they are celebrations of our shared human experience.

Education is another key area where we see significant

collaboration. Dr. Shigeyoshi Matsumae established Tokai University, inspired by the Danish educational culture in 1942. Many Japanese students choose Denmark as their study destination, attracted by our high-quality education system and innovative teaching methods. Conversely, Danish students are increasingly interested in studying in Japan, drawn by its rich cultural heritage and cutting-edge technological advancements. These educational exchanges are instrumental in building bridges between our countries and fostering a new generation of global citizens. I am pleased to see a number of young people visit each other on the bilateral Working Holiday Scheme introduced in 2007.

Additionally, the robust collaboration between Danish and Japanese universities has led to a vibrant exchange of ideas and innovations. Joint academic programs and research initiatives are nurturing the next generation of leaders and thinkers, equipped to address global challenges with a fresh perspective. These academic exchanges are not just about education but also about building enduring friendships and professional networks that will last a lifetime.

Moreover, Denmark's expertise in sustainable agricultural practices has found a receptive partner in Japan. Danish agricultural technologies, which emphasize efficiency and environmental protection, are being adapted to meet Japan's unique agricultural needs. This exchange of knowledge not only enhances food security but also promotes sustainable practices that are essential for preserving our planet.

Addressing global challenges together

We cannot ignore the unstable world situation in recent years that has deeply impacted the rules-based international order. The world has witnessed increasing geopolitical instability, making international cooperation more crucial than ever. Denmark is a proud member of NATO, an alliance that plays a vital role in maintaining security and stability not only in the North Atlantic but also globally. Our commitment to NATO is rooted in our belief in collective defence and the importance of standing together against common threats.

The EU also serves as an important platform for Denmark in voicing our commitment to democracy, peace, and the rule of law. The EU was founded on the idea that by committing ourselves to work together in areas of common interest, we can achieve sustained peace and stability. Since Denmark became a member 50 years ago, the EU has grown to become a family of nations united in a shared belief in the importance of a rules-based society that ensures the democratic rights and freedoms for all citizens.

Japan shares our commitment to global peace and security. Our two countries have worked together in various international forums to promote stability and address emerging security challenges. This includes cooperation in areas such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and most recently, cyber security. The challenges we face today — ranging from regional conflicts to global terrorism and cyber threats — require a unified and coordinated response. By strengthening our collaboration, Denmark and Japan can contribute to a safer and more secure world.

In these turbulent times, the partnership between nations like Denmark and Japan, anchored in our shared values, is all the more vital. We must unite in protecting the fundamental human rights that our Constitution Day represents. As we look ahead, the bonds between our nations remain unwavering, grounded in our mutual dedication to democracy, justice, and global peace. As we celebrate Constitution Day, it is important to remember that our commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights extends beyond our borders. That is why Denmark supports a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). I am also encouraged by Japan's support to secure rule-based order and free navigation in the Arctic.

Denmark and Japan's collaborative efforts in international peacekeeping missions and humanitarian aid reflect our shared dedication to creating a more just and peaceful world. Whether it is through disaster relief efforts or supporting democratic institutions in developing countries, our nations are united in their resolve to make a positive impact. Together, we are beacons championing these cherished ideals. Let us fortify the bridges between our great nations, creating a more just and sustainable world for all.

Feting commitment to democracy for future

In conclusion, Danish Constitution Day is a moment to celebrate not only our past achievements but also our ongoing commitment to the values that define us. It is a reminder of the strength that comes from unity and the progress that can be made when we work together towards common goals. Let us continue to honour the legacy of our constitutions by fostering a world where democracy, freedom, and justice prevail. The partnership between Denmark and Japan is a testament to what can be achieved when nations come together with a shared vision. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, it is crucial that we continue to build on this foundation of trust and cooperation.

The Emperor acceded to the Chrysanthemum Throne in 2019 after his father's abdication in 2019. Frederik X was enthroned this year following abdication of his mother Margrethe II in January this year. While our constitutions define that sovereign power lies with the people, our monarchies still play a unique role. The friendship between the Imperial family and the Danish royal family symbolizes the amicable and long-lasting relationship between the Japanese and Danes, and I hope it will last forever.

Happy Constitution Day to Danes everywhere, and sincere wishes to the Japanese people for the enduring friendship between us. Together, we can build a better, more sustainable, and more prosperous world for future generations.

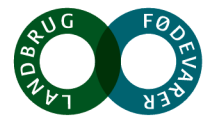
Congratulations

to the People of the Kingdom of Denmark
on the Anniversary of Their Constitution Day



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on the Occasion of
the Constitution Day of
the Kingdom of Denmark



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