

National Day of Switzerland

PUBLICITY

For Switzerland and Japan, a 160-year-long friendship full of vitality

By Dr. Andreas Baum
Ambassador of Switzerland

Dear Readers of The Japan News,
I feel honored to address you on the occasion of Switzerland's National Day.

The year 2024 is a special occasion as we celebrate 160 years of bilateral relations! Our friendship, born in business and rooted in a pioneering spirit, dates back to 1864 when a Swiss delegation led by watchmaker Aime Humbert-Droz signed the Treaty of Amity and Trade with Japan.

In February, we celebrated this milestone with 300 guests, including Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Minister Masahito Moriyama, at a special reception at the Swiss Embassy. We showcased historical time-pieces from the earliest economic exchanges, enjoyed a mix of yodeling and electronic music, and even had a robot serving raclette cheese! It was a night to remember, filled with tradition and innovation.

What's next? Our president, Viola Amherd, will arrive in Japan next week for an official visit, including an audience with His Majesty the Emperor and a meeting with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. In today's unstable global geopolitical landscape, Switzerland and Japan are more than ever natural partners who share and uphold similar values. I think of democracy, evidence-based decision-making and a rules-based international order.

This visit will take place at a time when Switzerland is expanding its footprint in Japan. After upgrading our presence in Osaka in 2021 with a consulate dedicated to research and innovation, and opening an honorary consulate in Fukuoka last year, Team Switzerland inaugurated a new honorary consulate in Higashikawa,



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A celebration of the 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Japan is held in Tokyo on Feb. 6, 2024. From left to right: Member of the House of Representatives and President of the Japan-Switzerland Parliamentary Friendship League Seishiro Eto; model and photographer Basil Kräher; TV celebrity Haruka Christine; ballet dancer Mizuka Ueno; Ambassador of Switzerland to Japan Dr. Andreas Baum; and Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Minister Dr. Masahito Moriyama.

Hokkaido, in May, focusing on tourism, sustainability and hospitality. I am confident that our new honorary consul, Olympic medalist Tomoka Takeuchi, will excel in her role.

Trade and business continue to be the bedrock of our relations. Switzerland ranks as the eighth-largest foreign investor in Japan. In turn, Switzerland is the ninth most important destination for Japanese investors, who are increasingly attracted by Switzerland's high performing innovation ecosystem. Science and academia are also crucial pillars of our partnership. Japan continues

to be our largest research partner in Asia based on Swiss National Science Foundation funding.

Not only do we share values and aspirations, but we also face similar challenges: the climate crisis, an aging population and the need to leverage innovation and technology to address these issues. Throughout this anniversary year, and leading up to the Swiss pavilion at the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo, our public diplomacy program Vitality.Swiss is providing a platform for stakeholders and experts from both countries to exchange ideas and explore solutions for a healthier, more sustainable and prosperous future. This autumn, the program will reach its peak during the Swiss Vitality Days, a series of events and initiatives exploring cutting-edge trends in biodiversity, energy and life sciences, but also gender equality, craftsmanship, art and food. In 2025, the Swiss pavilion at the Expo will continue this inspiring and fruitful dialogue with Japan and the world toward more vitalized societies.

From watchmaking to automation, from trade to diplomacy, from Heidi to high-tech, this is the story we celebrate throughout the year. More than ever, the Swiss-

Japanese partnership aims at shaping our common tomorrow. As my mission to Tokyo comes to an end and I sadly say goodbye, I leave with the conviction that the time has come to bring our bilateral relations to the next level. An even deeper, future-defining friendship between Japan and Switzerland lies within our reach.



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