

## **Ambassador's Speech – Europe Day – 4 May 2024**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. As Ambassador of Japan to the European Union, I am very pleased and honoured to be here today. I took up my post as Ambassador here in Brussels last December and it is my first-time experiencing Europe Day which marks a celebration of the unity, cooperation and shared values that bind Europe together.

This is the first time that Japan will be present at the open day here at the EEAS, and I am so glad to be able to introduce some of the beautiful aspects of Japanese culture among the many wonderful presentations of other diverse cultures from all over the world that are being showcased here today.

This year, Japan and the EU commemorate a significant milestone in our bilateral relations. 2024 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the EU's diplomatic mission in Tokyo while next year it will be our turn to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> year since the opening of our mission here in Brussels. These anniversaries highlight the enduring partnership and friendship between Japan and the EU.

Looking ahead at how we can further collaborate on a larger scale, I would like to remind you that next year, Japan will host Expo 2025 in Osaka. We have confirmed the participation of 161 countries and regions so far, and it will be a momentous event to share innovative ideas and technologies, to enhance cultural exchanges, and to provide a great stage for young generations to present their talents and creativities. The world expo will also serve as a platform to bring people from around the world in dialogue to address global issues with the aim of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. I encourage you all to come to visit Japan during the six months of Expo 2025 Osaka from April to October and witness what it represents!

As we celebrate the close relationship between Japan and the EU, I invite you to discover more about Japan at our ongoing workshop at the canteen. You can try your hand at origami, water calligraphy, kendama, a traditional Japanese skill toy, and kinpaku, gold leaf art. We are also providing information about Japan and Japanese culture which will be helpful if you visit Japan.

Finally, I am delighted to introduce the Ajisai choir, who will shortly delight us with a choral performance. Founded in 1981 by the Parents' Association of the Japanese School in Brussels, the choir is dedicated to showcasing the beauty and harmony of Japanese music in Belgium. I would like to extend my gratitude to them and the children who have joined us here today.

Now I will let you to enjoy the performance.

Arigato Gozaimasu. Thank you.