

WHAT'S NEW" from the Embassy of Japan in Luxembourg Number 8 – February 18, 2011

Annual meeting of all Japanese ambassadors to the European countries and senior officials took place on the 1st and 2nd of February in Tokyo.

During the meeting, emphasis was made on the cooperation between Japan and Europe to tackle various issues around the world and to develop closer economic and political partnerships based on our shared values.

Japan keeps close economic relationship with the European Union. One of the examples is the announcement made by the Japanese government on January 11, 2011 to purchase approximately 20 percent of the bonds issued by the European Financial Stability Facility.

The EU now accounts roughly 30 percent of the world GDP with 500 millions populations and the EU is one of the most important business partners for Japan. That means the economic stability in Europe is essential for Japan.

On the other hand, given that Japan, being the third biggest economic power in the world, sharing common views in the face of various difficult global challenges, its good economic performance is also very important for Europe as well as for the world. In this regard, at the World Economic Forum in Davos on the 29th of January, Prime Minister Kan emphasized that free trades were the best way for Japan to share prosperity with the rest of the world. The Japanese government is now determined to further promote economic partnerships and to open up the Japanese economy.

An effective solution to enhance direct Europe-Japan relationship is to conclude the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). Japanese enterprises currently create as many as 400 thousand direct employments in Europe. For an instance, DuPont Teijin Films produces high quality films in Luxembourg and exports them to Asian countries including China. The Japanese government expects that the next EU-Japan summit in May will reach an agreement to start the negotiations of the EPA.

Another frequently raised voices in the Ambassadors' meeting was their wish that European countries pay greater attentions to the security issues in the East Asia. Needless to say that the peace in Asia, where more than 3,5 billions people live and where no less than five nations possess the nuclear weapons, is prerequisite for the world peace. It goes without saying that peaceful and prosperous Asia is indispensable for Europe from now on. It is not a surprise that the Kan administration has been striving to ensure enduring stability in the Asia-Pacific region, by activating dialogue among the Asian countries, by reconfirming the importance of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and by revising the Japanese National Defense Program Guidelines in last December.

In this regard, an exchange of views between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Jean Asselborn and the Japanese State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yutaka Banno, in Kazakhstan on the sideline of the OSCE Summit on December 1, 2010, was extremely meaningful. We sincerely hope that meetings like this between our two countries continue to take place.