



# From Japan to the Northwest

News From the Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle



Dear friends of the Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle,

Our monthly newsletter, "From Japan to the Northwest," is intended to share important and interesting information related to Japan, our region, and the consulate's activities.

You can find [past issues of the newsletter here](#).



(Credit: JNTO)

Welcome to the January 2024 edition of From Japan to the Northwest!

In this edition, we will hear from Prime Minister Kishida on the new year, look at the most recent diplomatic movements from Japan, and take a glance at the spacecraft Japan landed on the moon.

As previously mentioned, this newsletter has switched to a **once-a-month publication schedule** to bring you the most important news from Japan and our region. Please be sure to **follow us on social media by clicking the icons below** for more frequent updates on local Japan-related events and the consulate's activities.



## 1. Happy New Year!

### [New Year's Reflection by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio](#)



(Credit: MOFA)

Happy new year to you all. I am Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio.

In the Oriental zodiac, 2024 is the year of the “wood dragon,” a year bringing wood, the first of the ten heavenly stems, together with the dragon, which ascends powerfully to the heavens. In line with this zodiac year, I want to make 2024 a year in which we confront the many challenges facing us with a reinvigorated spirit and powerfully propel Japan’s development across a broad array of fields, both domestically and internationally.

As for the economy, wage increases, capital investment, and share prices have reached their highest levels in 30 years. Thirty years have passed since the bursting of the economic bubble. I want to make 2024 the year in which we break completely free of the deflationary mindset and orientation towards shrinking through cost-cutting that has enveloped the Japanese economy.

We will first and foremost safeguard people’s daily lives from the current rise in prices. We must be certain

to achieve wage increases that surpass the rise in prices. I will request that, during this year's annual spring wage bargaining negotiations, the business community grant wage increases greater than the wage hikes implemented last year. We will also reinforce our tax system for promoting wage increases in a way that is also easy for small- and medium-sized enterprises to use. And, aiming to achieve synergistic effects with these wage increases, in June we will also implement fixed-sum reductions in income and resident taxes.

We need to have the public and private sectors work together so that everyone in the public feels tangibly what it is like for wages to rise and disposable incomes to increase. It is only after many individuals experience this for themselves that we will change the mindset of society as a whole.

Through wage increases surpassing the rise in prices, aggressive capital investment in green and digital fields, labor mobility beyond corporate boundaries, and actively replacing the old with the new in companies, we will mobilize a wide range of policies, aiming at a vibrant new economic stage, with human resources, goods, and capital all thoroughly set in motion.

In the area of diplomacy, this year will be a year of tension. Japan must be on its guard in light of the aggression against Ukraine, the situation in Israel and Palestine, and other aspects of the international situation. This is also a year marked by important national elections, including the U.S. presidential election and elections in Asia and Europe. What is required of us now is to make the most of our diplomatic power to overcome difficult situations and demonstrate leadership in a way only Japan can. Accordingly, I am determined to actively engage in diplomacy at the summit level again this year.

In addition, even in the midst of an increasingly complex East Asian security environment, with Russia and North Korea working in cooperation, we will firmly and fully defend the safety of the Japanese people, as well as our territory, territorial waters, and airspace.

Beyond this, Japan faces a multitude of significant challenges, including our responses to a society in which the population is shrinking and constitutional reform. Political stability is essential in promoting policies. I am determined to stand at the fore, making every possible effort to restore public trust in response to the LDP policy groups' political funding issue.

At this very moment, Japan is heading into an era of great change. That said, looking back on history, during times of enormous change, whether the Meiji Restoration, postwar reconstruction, or the period of rapid economic growth, Japan has taken hold of those trends, transforming that change into strength. In the Reiwa era, we will once again transform change into strength in the economy, society, and diplomatic relations to realize an era in which all the people are able to believe that tomorrow will be even better than today.

In closing, I ask for the public's further understanding and cooperation, and I extend my most sincere wishes for 2024 to be a splendid year for each and all, bringing good health and happiness.

KISHIDA Fumio  
Prime Minister of Japan  
January 1, 2024

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## 2. Noto Peninsula Earthquake

### [Operation Update No.19 : 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake: The Japanese Red Cross Society's Response](#)

On 1 January 2024 at 16:10 (Japan Standard Time), a magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan. As the epicenter was very shallow, large tremors were observed in many places and a tsunami warning was issued. Since then, 1,487 aftershocks have followed the main shock. The tsunami damaged at approximately 160 hectares in Suzu City and Noto City. Power and water supplies were still cut, communications were disrupted. Some districts are isolated with roads cut off and food, water, blanket and fuel, basic needs are still in short supply. The quake caused fires in some cities, and it is estimated that hundreds of houses were burnt down. According to the Japan Nuclear Regulation Authority, no issues have been found with reactors at nuclear power plants in the affected area, including the Shika nuclear power plant in Ishikawa Prefecture.

The Japanese Government applied the Disaster Relief Act towards 35 cities, 11 towns and 1 village in 4 prefectures including Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa and Fukui in order to lead the national-level relief operations. As of 9:00 on 22 January, the local government confirmed 232 deaths in Ishikawa prefecture. On top of this, 22 people in Ishikawa prefecture remain unaccounted for. At least 1,279 people were injured. More than 13,061 houses are reported to be collapsed/damaged, which brought about 16,243 people remained in 478 evacuation centers.

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### **Assistance by the United States of America for the Noto Peninsula Earthquake in 2024**

In response to the damage caused by the recent 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake, the U.S. government announced on January 5 that it would provide \$100,000 in assistance to Peace Winds Japan, an NGO working in the affected areas.

In addition to the warm messages of sympathy Japan has received from the U.S. government, including a statement by President Biden, Japan welcomes and appreciates this latest decision as a sign of the strong bonds between Japan and the United States.

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## **3. Japanese Foreign Relations**

### **Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Indo-Pacific Dialogue**



(Credit: Atlantic Council)

On January 5, the Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Indo-Pacific Dialogue was held in Washington, D.C., the United States. Mr. KOBE Yasuhiro, Deputy Minister/Director-General, Foreign Policy Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Daniel J. Kritenbrink, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and Mr. Chung Byung-won, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Korea (ROK) attended this dialogue.

The representatives of the United States, Japan, and the ROK discussed each country's Indo-Pacific approach and opportunities for cooperation, with an emphasis on partnership with Southeast Asian and Pacific Island countries.

They shared their respective assessments on geopolitical trends shaping the Indo-Pacific, highlighting the need for enhanced trilateral cooperation.

Assistant Secretary Kritenbrink, Deputy Minister/Director-General Kobe, and Deputy Minister Chung reaffirmed their intent to continue to hold the trilateral dialogue annually and coordinate closely on issues of shared concern in the Indo-Pacific.

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### **Courtesy Call on Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio by a Delegation of the U.S. Congressional Study Group on Japan**



(Credit: Cabinet Public Affairs Office, MOFA)

On January 24, commencing at 4:05 p.m. for approximately 30 minutes, Mr. KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, received a courtesy call from a delegation of the United States Congressional Study Group on Japan (CSGJ). The summary of the courtesy call is as follows.

At the outset, Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the visit to Japan by the delegation of the U.S. Congressional Study Group on Japan and expressed gratitude for the U.S. support for the Noto Peninsula earthquake. In response, the delegation expressed their condolences for the damage caused by the earthquake and the collision at Haneda Airport.

The attending members of the delegation expressed their admiration for the Kishida administration's efforts to promote the Japan-U.S. alliance and regional stability, their support for Japan's role in the international community, and their desire to continue their efforts to further strengthen the good Japan-U.S. relationship. The participants also exchanged views regarding regional affairs, relationship between U.S. States and Japan, the future expansion of personal exchanges between the U.S. and Japan and other issues.

The United States Congressional Study Group on Japan (CSGJ) was established in 1993 to focus on Japan. The non-partisan U.S. Congressional group now consists of approximately 90 current members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The group promotes understanding of Japan in the U.S. Congress and builds personal connections between the U.S. Congress and Japan through holding various lectures and study sessions.

The visiting group included Representative Diana DeGette (Democrat-Colorado) (co-chair), Representative Larry Bucshon (Republican-Indiana) (co-chair), Representative Betty McCollum (Democrat-Minnesota), Representative Dan Newhouse (Republican-Washington), Representative Sylvia Garcia (Democrat-Texas), Representative Marilyn Strickland (Democrat-Washington), and Representative Jen Kiggans (Republican-Virginia).

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## **Foreign Minister KAMIKAWA's Visit to Ukraine**

On January 7th, Ms. KAMIKAWA Yoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan visited Ukraine and held meetings in Kyiv including with H.E. Mr. Dmytro KULEBA, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.



During the visit, Minister Kamikawa once again reiterated to the Ukrainian side that Japan's consistent policy of standing with and supporting Ukraine remains unchanged even in the face of current severe international situation.

In addition, Minister Kamikawa directly conveyed to the Ukrainian side that Japan will strongly demonstrate its commitment to the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine under the close public-private partnership through hosting the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Reconstruction in Japan on February 19 this year with the in-person participation of H.E. Mr. Denys SHMYHAL, Prime Minister of Ukraine.

Furthermore, Minister Kamikawa engaged in candid discussion with the Ukrainian partners on the efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace and on Japan's potential for concrete contribution towards that end.

In this visit, Minister Kamikawa participated in the handover ceremony of large-scale power-related equipment for winterization assistance. The Minister visited the site of assistance to women and children with a view to stress the importance of the WPS concept which emphasizes that active participation of women as leaders in reconstruction and peace building will enable a more sustainable peace to be achieved.

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## **The Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation**



(Credit: MOFA)

On December 17, from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation was held at Hotel Okura, Tokyo. Mr. KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan attended the Summit. Prime Minister Kishida and President Joko Widodo of Indonesia, this year's ASEAN Chair, co-chaired the Commemorative Summit. The Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation and its Implementation Plan has been adopted by the end of the Commemorative Summit.

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## **Entry into Force of the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology**

On January 9th, the Government of Japan and the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) exchanged diplomatic notes informing each other that their respective internal procedures for the entry into force of “the Agreement between the two countries concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology,” signed in Abu Dhabi on May 25, 2023, has been completed. Hence, this agreement entered into force on the same day. This is the first time for Japan to sign this type of agreement with a country in the Middle East region.

The agreement establishes a legal framework for the handling of defense equipment and technology to be transferred between the two countries, with the aim of strengthening joint research, development and production of defense equipment and technology which the governments of Japan and the UAE both take part in, as well as bilateral cooperation in the field of security and defense.

This agreement is expected to make the cooperation between Japan and the UAE on defense equipment and technology even closer and contribute to the strengthening of security and defense cooperation between the two countries through ensuring the appropriate control of defense equipment and technology transferred between the two countries regarding the further transfer to third parties and extra-purpose use and through. It is also expected to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of Japan’s defense production and technological bases, thereby contributing to the security of Japan.

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## **Adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution on scaling up and monitoring aid to the Gaza Strip**

Japan welcomes the adoption of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2720 on scaling up and monitoring aid to the Gaza Strip on December 23.

Japan voted in favor of the resolution based on its comprehensive consideration that the resolution is expected to contribute to the immediate and unconditional release of the remaining hostages and the expansion of humanitarian assistance, as the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip further deteriorates since the recent resumption of hostilities. Japan, as a member of the UNSC, has been actively working for the adoption of this resolution. Japan also highly appreciates the tireless diplomatic efforts made by the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and other countries concerned.

Japan strongly urges all parties to act in good faith based on the UNSC resolutions 2712 and 2720. Japan expects that the work of the UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator to be appointed based on this resolution will contribute to the expansion of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip and the improvement of the humanitarian situation.

Japan continues to make persistent and active diplomatic efforts toward the immediate release of the hostages, improving the humanitarian situation, and calming down the situation as soon as possible, while closely communicating with the countries and international organizations concerned.

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## **4. Japan in Aviation**



## **Nomination of Mr. ONUMA Toshiyuki as a candidate for the election of the next Council President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**

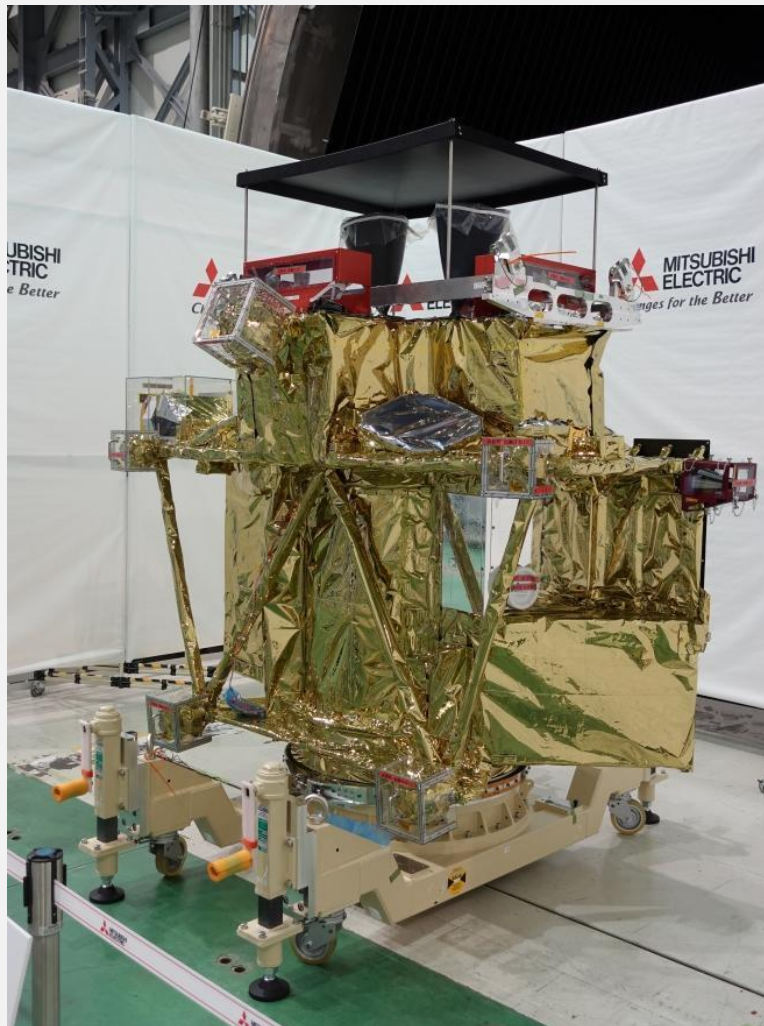
The Government of Japan has decided to nominate Mr. ONUMA Toshiyuki, Senior Deputy Director-General of the Civil Aviation Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), as a candidate for the next Council President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in the election at the ICAO Council Meeting to be held in November of 2025.

Since joining the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) in 1992, Mr. ONUMA has led policy coordination on various areas of aviation, including bilateral air talks, decarbonization and air navigation services, both in Japan and in the international arena. He also has two years of experience working in the ICAO Legal Bureau since 2001.

Mr. ONUMA's extensive experience and leadership to date have been highly evaluated by the international community, and Japan believes that he is the most relevant candidate for the next Council President of ICAO, which was established aiming for the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation. Japan will make best efforts to obtain supports from other countries for Mr. ONUMA's successful election.

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## **The results of the Moon Landing by the Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM)**



(Credit: JAXA)

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) confirms that the Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) successfully landed on the moon surface on January 20, 2024, at 0:20 am (JST). Communication with spacecraft has been established after the landing.

However, the solar cells are currently not generating power, and priority is given to data acquisition from the SLIM on the moon.

Detailed analysis of the acquired data will be conducted in the future, and we will continue to share any updates on the situation.

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That's it for this issue of "From Japan to the Northwest."

Thank you for reading. Until next month!

Sincerely,  
Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle

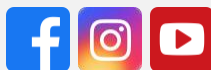
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