

Speech of His Royal Highness the Grand Duke
at the State Banquet Hosted by
Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan

The Imperial Palace
Tokyo - November 27, 2017

Majesties,

I thank you with all my heart for the very warm hospitality that you have shown to us these days, in the middle of *koyo* as the green of nature transitions to red and yellow. The Grand Duchess, who, to her great regret, could not join me on this long journey, and I consider your personal invitation as a sign of friendship and affection for our people.

Majesty,

You have shown much affinity and integrity toward my father since first meeting him on the occasion of the accession of Elizabeth II in 1953. From state visits to private meetings, real bonds of affection have grown between our families. We are happy to be able to share with you these official moments as well as more personal moments, and thus appreciate your uniquely fine character, as that of the Empress.

For all Westerners, the discovery of Japan and its civilization remains a unique experience. I remember very well the year of 1981, when I traveled your country incognito by bus. The Grand Duchess joined me at the end of the journey, which allowed us, as newlyweds, to discover many wonders including the island of Hokkaido. I was struck by the excellent education of the young people I met, because they knew Luxembourg despite being a distant country. The Japanese business world also deeply intrigued me with its emphasis on reaching a consensus to make decisions, which was not very common in our country. And then I felt personally fulfilled by coordinating contacts with a Japanese company that later decided to settle in my country and is still there.

Other memories related to Japan remain with me, such as the opening of our embassy in Tokyo in 1987 and the inauguration of *la Maison de Luxembourg* (Luxembourg House) in 2003, or the opening of the Winter Olympic Games in Nagano in 1998, when I had the honor of joining the International Olympic Committee.

These personal memories do not make me forget that the country of Japan and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg have shared a strong and rich relationship for a long

time. This year we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

Since the first Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Adachi, handed his credentials to my grandmother Grand Duchess Charlotte in 1927, our bilateral ties have continued to grow. Both Japan and Luxembourg are committed to fundamental values, namely the peace and security of States and individuals, the defense of human rights, and democracy, as well as the promotion of sustainable development.

Quite naturally, defending these common values leads us to believe in the virtues of multilateralism and to cooperate closely in the context of international organizations, starting with the United Nations.

Because these organizations are anxious to create the conditions for a more equitable world, our two countries are also important contributors to development aid, a commitment that earns us great respect. I was also pleased to see very recently, during my participation in COP 23 organized by the Republic of Fiji in Bonn, a great alignment between Japan and Luxembourg in our commitment to the Paris Agreement to counteract global climate warming, which is a very serious threat to our planet.

Majesty,

Right before our departure, the Luxembourg press reported a special order that had just left Luxembourg for the Land of the Rising Sun, namely a particular bread oven that is at the forefront of progress for heat recovery. This display of Japanese confidence in a product of Luxembourg that combines tradition and advanced technology exemplifies the very beneficial relations between our two countries.

As different as they are, Japan and Luxembourg have very advanced and, we would say, mature economies in constant quest for diversification. While our cooperation in the financial sector began in the 1970s with the establishment of major Japanese banks in Luxembourg, industrial exchanges are maintained at a high level, and new fields of action are opening up before us. A few examples are in cutting-edge areas

such as medical research or the exploitation of space resources. This evolution shows how our exchanges are constantly adapting themselves and shaping a common future.

The Japanese and Luxembourgish people indeed maintain a sincere friendship, based on curiosity and respect and reinforced by mutual admiration of cultures. The Japanese community established in Luxembourg has contributed to our open and cosmopolitan society, an integral part of a Europe that has not quite abandoned the idea of influencing the course of events.

Continuing close collaboration in the academic sector is of utmost importance. The University of Luxembourg, which is young but promising, has signed agreements with your most prestigious universities. Exchanges between students and researchers are sure to enhance our friendly relationship. They also echo a tradition of cooperation initiated by Luxembourgish missionaries who have worked for the development of higher education since the last century.

Majesty,

I am confident that this state visit will remain etched in our memories, just as my parents were so deeply touched by your welcome in 1999. Japan continues to invite a great deal of fascination with its unique marriage between attachment to tradition and openness to modernity. By embodying this unchanging Japanese spirit, Majesty, you have gained the veneration of your people and respect beyond borders. That is why we would like to pay tribute to you, as Emperor of modernity and peace.

Excellences,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I invite you to raise your glass to the health of their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress, and to the friendship between our two peoples.