

**Activities of Her Majesty the Empress over the Past Year  
and  
Her Birthday Schedule**

(October 20, 2007)

Her Majesty the Empress was engaged in various official duties over the past year, including attendance at events and ceremonies, both inside and outside the Imperial Palace, visits to welfare and cultural facilities and receiving official guests including State Guests. Her Majesty performed duties in her official capacity on more than 300 occasions. In addition, Her Majesty attended the ritual ceremonies of the Imperial Palace on 17 occasions, and received those who offered newly-harvested rice of the year, the voluntary helpers at the *Kashiko Dokoro* (Palace Sanctuary) and the Palace voluntary workforce, on a total of 52 occasions.

In the past year, Their Majesties' official regional visits included Niigata in August to extend their sympathies to the people in the areas affected by the Niigata-ken Chuetsu-oki Earthquake, the 26th National Convention for the Development of an Abundantly Productive Sea (Saga), the 58th National Arbor Day Festival (Hokkaido), the 62nd National Sports Festival (Akita), and the opening ceremony of the 11th International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championships in Athletics Osaka. Their Majesties also visited various regional cultural and welfare facilities, traveling to many municipalities where they responded to the welcome extended by large numbers of local people lining the route. Together with His Majesty the Emperor, Her Majesty made official visits to seven prefectures including municipalities of 14 cities, 7 towns and one village in the past year.

In Tokyo, Her Majesty accompanied His Majesty the Emperor to attend ceremonies related to academic and artistic achievements including the "Japan Academy Prize," the "Japan Art Academy Award," the "International Prize for Biology" and the "Japan Prize" for international scientific achievements, as well as commemorative events such as the "National Assembly of Welfare Volunteers and Child Welfare Volunteers to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Welfare Volunteer System." Her Majesty also attended various events on her own, such as the annual "National Meeting of the Japanese Red Cross Society," the award ceremony of the "Florence Nightingale Medal," the reception to commemorate the "80th Anniversary of

the Establishment of the Japanese Midwives' Association (JMA)" and the reception of the "Japanese Nursing Association" held on the occasion of the "2007 International Council of Nurses (ICN) Conference and the Council of National Representatives (CNR)." On those occasions she met with the persons concerned and expressed her appreciation for their work. Her Majesty also attended various public performances such as charity concerts and exhibitions where she met with those involved in social welfare activities, culture and the arts.

As she does every year at the Imperial Residence, Her Majesty received in audience the awardees of the annual *Nemunoki* (Silk Tree) Award, who are involved in helping physically disabled children. Her Majesty also listened to various presentations and reports including those from ambassadors returning to Japan from their assigned countries, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, Japan Overseas Development Youth Volunteers who carry out programs aimed at ethnic Japanese communities in Latin America, Senior Volunteers, and the President and Vice-President of the Japanese Red Cross Society. In July, she listened to the report by the Governor of Niigata Prefecture of the status of damage following the Niigata-ken Chuetsu-oki Earthquake.

As this year marks the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Carl von Linné, Their Majesties received invitations from the Kingdom of Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to attend the Linné anniversary celebrations. Her Majesty together with His Majesty paid official visits to these two countries that are closely related to Linné to participate in these events towards the end of May. On this occasion, Their Majesties also paid official visits to three Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the United Kingdom, in addition to attending commemorative events at the Linnean Society of London, Their Majesties responded to an invitation from the founder of Helen House, the world's first hospice exclusively for children, and visited the House to commemorate the 25th anniversary of its founding. Her Majesty's association with Helen House and Douglas House, which was later established for young people, goes back to 2005 when Her Majesty met Sister Frances, the Houses' founder, the patients and their carers upon their visit to Japan. The anniversary ceremony of Helen House had been arranged to coincide with Their Majesties' stay in the country this year, and Their Majesties attended the ceremony and visited the patients in both Houses.

This year, the annual imperial sericulture began on May 9, with the placing of eggs of

Japanese wild silkworms on leaves by attaching pieces of paper with the eggs to Japanese oak tree branches. On June 13, after her overseas visits, Her Majesty moved the larvae of cultivated silkworms to the rearing bed at the Momijiyama Imperial Cocoonery. Her Majesty performed the traditional rituals such as feeding mulberry leaves to the silkworms, putting larvae in cocooning frames, and harvesting the first cocoons. In addition, Her Majesty made frequent visits to the cocoonery and the mulberry fields in the Imperial Palace Grounds. At these places Her Majesty engaged in gathering mulberry leaves and shredding them, making cocooning frames, gathering mulberry leaves, harvesting cocoons, etc. As in the past 13 years, Her Majesty offered a part of the harvested silk of the *koishimaru* variety (the oldest species now kept in Japan) to the Shosoin Treasure-house to be used for the restoration of its treasures.

As to the ritual ceremonies of the Imperial Palace, Her Majesty attended, in addition to the annual ceremonies, the 1,500th Anniversary of the Demise of Emperor Buretsu, the 1,300th Anniversary of the Demise of Emperor Monmu, and the 900th Anniversary of the Demise of Emperor Horikawa at the *Kashiko Dokoro* Sanctuary, and also paid her respects at the Sanctuary prior to her overseas visit and upon her return.

This year as usual, Her Majesty carried out her official duties in earnest, and, often, there were even times when she attended official engagements and rituals on weekends and national holidays. In March Her Majesty suffered from oral inflammation and nasal bleeding, followed by bleeding from the intestinal wall. At the end of March Her Majesty accepted medical advice to rest for a total of eight days intermittently, including weekends and national holidays. As well as taking care of her own health, Her Majesty has always been much concerned about the health of His Majesty and tries to spend time with His Majesty by going for early morning strolls and playing tennis together on summer evenings, free weekends and holidays. Making good use of her time, Her Majesty reads books and continues to practice the piano. As last year, Her Majesty attended the Kusatsu International Summer Music Academy & Festival in Gunma Prefecture this year to study ensemble performance.

On October 20th, Her Majesty will spend her 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday receiving birthday greetings from various people. She will attend six separate events between 10:30 and noon to receive greetings from members of the Imperial family, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the House of Councillors, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Cabinet Ministers, and the Imperial Household

Agency staff. After having lunch with members of the Imperial family at noon, Her Majesty will attend two separate events in the afternoon to receive birthday greetings from former members of the staff, followed by a tea with lecturers and others. Her Majesty will receive greetings from Princess Aiko and other young Prince and Princesses of the Imperial family later in the afternoon, and finish her day with a private dinner with her three married children and their spouses.

Birthday Celebration Schedule of Her Majesty The Empress

Saturday, October 20, 2007

Time	Greetings received by	Birthday Celebrations	Attended by	Location	Style
10:30 am	Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress	Receive felicitations	Grand Chamberlain and staff members of the Board of Chamberlains	Imperial Residence	
11:00 am	His Majesty The Emperor	Receive felicitations	Grand Steward, Vice-Grand Steward representing staff members, Special Advisors	Houou-no-ma	Individual (Standing)
11:10 am	Her Majesty The Empress	Receive felicitations	Grand Steward and senior officials, Special Advisors, Ladies-in-waiting	Houou-no-ma	Group (Standing)
11:20 am	Her Majesty The Empress	Receive felicitations	Staff members of the Imperial Household Agency and of the Imperial Guard Headquarters	Kita-damari	Group (Standing)
11:40 am	Her Majesty The Empress	Receive felicitations	Prime Minister, Ministers of State, Director-General of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, Deputy-Chief Cabinet Secretary, Speaker and Vice-Speaker of the House of Representatives, President and Vice-President of the House of Councillors, Chief Justice and Justice of the Supreme	Ume-no-ma	Group (Standing)

Birthday Celebration Schedule of Her Majesty The Empress

Saturday, October 20, 2007

			Court, and their spouses		
11:50 am	Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress	Receive felicitations	Their Imperial Highnesses The Crown Prince and Princess and other Imperial Highnesses	Ume-no-ma	Individual (Standing)
11:55 am	Her Majesty The Empress	Receive felicitations	Former members and relatives of the Imperial Family	Take-no-ma	Group (Standing)
0:05 pm	Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress	Lunch	Their Imperial Highnesses The Crown Prince and Princess and other Imperial Highnesses, former members and relatives of the Imperial Family	Rensui	Seated
1:40 pm	Her Majesty The Empress	Receive felicitations	Former staff members of the Imperial Household Agency and of the Imperial Guard Headquarters	Kita-damari	Group (Standing)
2:00 pm	Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress	Receive felicitations	Former Grand Stewards, Special Advisors, senior officials of the Imperial Household Agency, etc.	Rensui South	
4:30 pm	Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress	Tea	Lecturers, friends, etc.	Imperial Residence	