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JapanCoE25 Now and Then

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About yourself.

In 2017 I was appointed as Director General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law of the Council of Europe and I still hold this very challenging position. My colleagues and I, together with representatives of and experts from all our Member States – and often also Observer States – develop and implement standards and norms concerning civil and political rights, social and economic rights, as well as the effective functioning of democratic institutions, the independence and efficiency of justice and the fight against crime, in particular terrorism, organized crime, corruption, money laundering and cybercrime. Beyond core human rights issues, such as the prevention of torture, the abolition of death penalty, guarantees against arbitrary deprivation of liberty, the right to privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of religion, the challenges posed to our societies by modern technologies (artificial intelligence, biotechnologies), or climate change are very high on our agenda.

PRESS FREEDOM:
CHECKS ON MEDIA IN
MUST NOT BECOME
A NEW NORMAL

JAPAN & Council of Europe
 **25 YEARS** 

NOW AND THEN

**COMPARED TO 25 YEARS AGO,
DID SITUATIONS CHANGE
IN TERMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS,
DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW?**



Today's challenges are different: whereas societal changes, new technologies, new security threats or the climate change can and must be dealt with in full respect of fundamental rights and democratic principles, the wish for short term efficiency and other factors generate sometimes tensions and disagreements in societies and between our Member States. The space for civil society is shrinking and we experience simultaneously a growing mistrust to democratic institutions and a decline of multilateralism. The Council of Europe was created some 70 years ago to make sure that new challenges are addressed by our Member States in a coherent and coordinated way based on the principles agreed upon. We pursue our work with the deep conviction that the Organisation's contribution is instrumental for the democratic stability and peace.

YOU 25 YEARS AGO

25 years ago I was working for the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission). Constitutional reforms were at the center of our activities. These reforms were essential for the democratic transition in many States, for these States' accession to the Council of Europe and, for some of them, later on to the European Union. There was an unprecedented enthusiasm for the values that the Council of Europe defends - Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of Law. Japan joined the Council of Europe as observer State at this very moment, bringing its own knowledge and experience to our Organisation.

JAPAN AS AN OBSERVER

WHAT KIND OF COOPERATION DO YOU EXPECT FURTHER BETWEEN COE AND JAPAN IN THE COMING YEARS?



Japan is an essential partner for our activities in particular when global challenges are at stake: environmental protection, governance of artificial intelligence, data protection, care for people on the move (asylum seekers and migrants), fight against terrorism, economic crime and others. The pandemic has also shown how important coordination and sharing of experiences can be in the field of the right to health. I therefore expect Japan to continue its constructive co-operation with our institutions and bodies and engage even further in a fruitful and mutually enriching dialogue on the respect of our common values!

YOU AND JAPAN

Japan is a natural neighbour for the Council of Europe, since our Organisation covers a geographic space from Reykjavik to Vladivostok! It is also a country whose rich experience can only be beneficial to our work. I can without hesitation confirm that the conferences we organized in the Council of Europe with academics from Japan made me – and many of my colleagues – think out of our usual box!