

Milestones over 30 years

- Nov. 1996** — Became an observer state to the CoE
- Feb. 2003 — Ratified the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons
- July 2012 — Ratified the Convention on Cybercrime
- June 2013 — Ratified the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters
- Oct. 2017 — Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture joined the Intercultural Cities Network
- Oct. 2019 — Kazufumi Onishi, Mayor of Kumamoto City, participated in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
- Nov. 2021 — Donated cherry trees to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the observer status
- May 2023 — Joined the Register of Damage for Ukraine as an associate member
- Aug. 2023 — Ratified the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence
- Aug. 2023 — Masahiro Sogabe, Professor, Graduate School of Law, Kyoto University, appointed as observer to the Venice Commission
- Feb. 2025 — Signed the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law
- Aug. 2025 — Shizuoka Prefecture joined the Intercultural Cities Network
- Nov. 2025 — Akihiko Tanaka, JICA President, spoke at the 13th World Forum for Democracy






By closely following the progress of CoE discussions and promptly supporting emerging human rights treaties starting in Europe that have the potential to gain broader global acceptance in the future, Japan seeks to strengthen human rights protection in Japan, Europe, and ultimately worldwide. Based on the fundamental values promoted by the CoE –human rights, democracy, and the rule of law– and the cooperation built so far between Japan and Europe, Japan will continue to engage in related initiatives.



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The 30th anniversary

of Japan's Observer Status to the Council of Europe

1996 - 2026



In November 1996, Japan became the sole Asian country to join the Council of Europe as an Observer State. Three years before, in 1993, Japan had become an observer to the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (Venice Commission). Japan and European countries both attach importance to fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Japan's decision to participate in the discussions at the CoE, a pan-European international organization dedicated to protecting and promoting these values, has enabled Japan to draw on these discussions in the development of various domestic systems and to contribute from a non-European perspective. Through its participation, Japan aims to promote mutual understanding between Japan and Europe.

During its 30 years as an observer, Japan has supported CoE activities by dispatching Japanese experts to various meetings, hosting human rights-related seminars at CoE, and providing financial assistance to CoE projects and conferences, thereby supporting efforts in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.



A recent example is the attendance of Akihiko Tanaka, JICA President at the World Forum for Democracy in November 2025. He spoke as a panelist at the WFD and held discussions with Bjørn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of CoE. In March 2025, Japan supported the organization of a conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, focused on the digital dimension of violence against women and girls. In November 2025, Fumiko Kudo, Specially Appointed Associate Professor at the Research Center on Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues at Osaka University participated in the thematic hearing "Connecting Asia, the Global South and Europe for responsible AI in the public sector," organized by the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI), and presented Japan's efforts to institutionalize AI in the public sector.

As the only Asian observer state that has ratified the Convention on Cybercrime, Japan has supported CoE initiatives such as the Octopus Project for over 10 years, providing a contribution of approximately 45,000 euros annually. In 2025, a webinar series on cyber violence in Southeast Asia was held in December with Japan's support.

Japan's Support and Contributions



ECHR Japan and the European Court of Human Rights

Japan's Supreme Court has deepened judicial exchanges with the ECHR, an institution of the CoE. Notably, in 2024, Justice Kusano visited the ECHR, and in 2023, Chief Justice Tokura held an online meeting with President O'Leary. These exchanges include personnel visits and case law exchanges. In 2024, Japan co-hosted a symposium on hate speech with the René Cassin Foundation, featuring an ECHR judge as a speaker. Japan has also collaborated with the ECHR to host symposia on human rights in the digital sphere in 2021 and on women's rights in the 21st century in 2020, continuing its engagement in human rights issues.



Support for Ukraine

The CoE has prioritized support for Ukraine following Russia's aggression. In May 2023, the Register of Damage for Ukraine was established. Japan joined as an associate member in the same month and made a total contribution of approximately 2 million euros over three years (2024-2026). In addition, Japan continues to follow discussions on the Claims Commission and Special Tribunal. Japan remains committed to close cooperation with the CoE to achieve a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

Japan and Council of Europe Treaties

Japan values the role the CoE plays in setting standards and leading activities in the fields of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Japan has ratified several CoE treaties: the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons in 2003, the Convention on Cybercrime in 2012, the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters in 2013, and the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence in 2023. In 2025, Japan signed the

Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.

