

Press remarks by President Charles Michel following the EU-Japan summit

Dear Fumio (Kishida), dear Ursula (von der Leyen),

It is a pleasure to welcome you here in Brussels. Today, Japan and the EU's cooperation is as strong and positive as ever. I would like to thank you, dear Fumio, dear Prime Minister, for your leadership — and, personally, for your friendship. Japan is one of the EU's staunchest allies, and Japan is our closest partner in the Indo-Pacific region. Today, we agreed to work for greater security and prosperity for our people and to generate more opportunities for our businesses. Our shared values are the bedrock of our relationship: democracy, rule of law and multilateral cooperation.

Japan's support to the people of Ukraine has been impressive. As the current G7 chair, you have stood resolutely in backing Ukraine and condemning Russia. And just yesterday, in Vilnius, we, the G7 leaders, committed to ramping up our support for Ukraine and increasing the pressure on Russia. The EU and Japan are also working together to bolster peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea's nuclear programme and reckless missile tests — like the one that took place yesterday — threaten regional and international security. We condemn these in the strongest possible terms.

The Indo-Pacific is a vibrant and growing region, a key player in shaping global affairs. In the EU, we are stepping up our engagement with your region. Our 27 Member States are united on China. Recently, the European Council reaffirmed its multifaceted approach. Both China and the EU have an interest in a stable and constructive relationship; we will engage to tackle global challenges. But there are issues that need to be addressed: level playing field, reciprocity and a balanced economic relationship. We will diversify and de-risk, where appropriate. We will always promote our values and our interests. Today, we agreed to deepen our exchanges on all these issues.

We are also taking a step forward in our cooperation on security, and we agreed to launch a strategic dialogue that will also include security and defence. This will boost our cooperation in areas like maritime security or cyber and hybrid threats.

Today, we also identified key projects that will help us achieve our green and digital goals, like the hydropower storage project in Vietnam that will assist in phasing out coal and driving forward the green transition, or the Northern Corridor project in East Africa that will improve trade and transport connectivity in that region. Economic resilience is a top priority for both Japan and the EU. We agreed to step up our strategic cooperation to reinforce our supply chains, especially in critical raw materials like rare earths. The EU and Japan are also powerful engines in protecting our planet. In the run-up to COP28, we agreed to cooperate more in areas that will drive forward our green transition, like solar supply chains, offshore wind, grid technology and energy efficiency. We are also boosting cooperation on hydrogen production.

Just last year, bilateral trade between Japan and the EU increased more than 13%. And now we are building on that momentum. We specifically discussed improving market access, and today the EU agreed to once again allow the import of products from the Fukushima region. EU foods will also get better access to Japanese markets. This is another sign of trust and cooperation.

Japan and the European Union share a genuine bond that we can be proud of. We are reliable partners. We are reliable friends for greater peace and security in the world and that will continue. Thank you.

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