

*Check against delivery*

**Opening Remarks by S.E. Ryuta Mizuuchi  
at the Cherry Blossom Business Event**

Mr. Wolfgang Scheibenpflug (Vice President of Vienna Airport),  
Mr. Masahiro Kawano (Chairman of Ota City Industrial Promotion  
Organization),  
Mr. Katsuhiko Kawabata,  
Mr. Peter de Leeuw (Host),  
Distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today for the Cherry Blossom Business Event at Vienna Airport City. First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Wolfgang Scheibenpflug for organizing and hosting this event, and also inviting me as one of the speakers to the opening. I am also very pleased about the positive resonance expressed so far by sponsors, participants and others, as well as their interest in this project.

Since today's event aims to highlight the importance of Vienna as a logistic hub, let me start by giving you historical evidence for that. It goes back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

At that time, there was an enthronement ceremony of the Russian Czar, and Japan's Meiji Emperor sent a delegation headed by an imperial prince to represent him at the ceremony.

Ito Hirobumi who later became the first Prime Minister of Japan was studying Constitution of the German Empire in Berlin. By instruction, Ito was ordered to accompany the delegation, so he traveled to Vienna for the planning and preparation to that visit.

Why? Because the party was supposed to land at Trieste, a port in the Adriatic Sea, and from there, travel all the way to St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire. For this journey, Vienna served as the logistical center because, at that time, most of the route was under the Habsburgs.

Today, this covers Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Poland; then probably the Baltics<sup>1</sup> – they are all EU members today – and finally Russia. This dimension of Vienna, located in the middle of this geographical scope, requires no explanation if you look at the map of Central and Eastern Europe. I didn't talk about the Balkans and Ukraine, but undoubtedly, they are also included as incumbent and prospective EU members, because, as the Viennese say, the Balkans start from Landstraße, the third district of Vienna.

There is a by-product of this mission. In Vienna, Ito was staying at the home of Lorenz von Stein, Professor of Constitutional Law at Vienna University. His research in Berlin didn't show much progress, because Ito found the lecture on German Constitution too abstract. But learning from Stein, Ito's eyes got wide-open. For one thing, Stein spoke English which Ito was capable of understanding. For another, Stein was an expert in comparative studies. So, Ito could learn constitutions of many countries at the same time. This is how our Meiji Constitution owed to Vienna, as you have seen.

Doesn't this anecdote look similar to the situations of Berlin and Vienna Airports today? Berlin has been struggling, even to be opened. Vienna is developing steadily – and much faster...

Today, I appreciate the initiative taken by the Vienna Airport City to establish more closer ties between Vienna and Japan, particularly with Haneda City Airport. As I am living in Ota-ku, home of Haneda Airport, I very much welcome both Airports coming closer and learning from each other, not only in terms of logistics, but also in their function as future-oriented business hubs.

I am also encouraged by Japanese and Austrian businesses gathered here, which confirms the interest towards each other at a time of multiple global crisis. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the consequences including the sanctions that followed, reminded us of the risks of dealing with countries with authoritarian regimes. The importance of economic security including the supply chains, is, thus, more relevant than ever,

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<sup>1</sup> The eastern part of Poland and the Baltics were under the Russian rule.

including in our part of the world. We have every reason to promote economic relations among value partners like Japan and Austria.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is one more opportunity that we see ahead of us: the Osaka-Kansai Expo scheduled just one year from now. I am happy to announce that the Austrian government, WKO, federal states and private stakeholders are actively preparing Austria's participation in the Expo. Two weeks ago, the groundbreaking for the Austrian pavilion was celebrated in Osaka, which was blessed by the Foreign Ministers of both countries at their telephone conversation recently. On my part, I am also doing my utmost to support these efforts.

Either way, Vienna and Haneda Airports are springboards and gateways to the Expo. Why not take the chance now, as did the Meiji Government?

This, in brief, is the situation as you meet today - now it is up to you all, for presentations and discussions.

And I wish you all an exciting day at Vienna Airport City, and great success in future business cooperation among yourselves, as well as between Japan and Austria.

Thank you for your attention.