

Check for delivery

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Mizuuchi Ryuta
on the Occasion of the Signing Ceremony for the Twinning Statement between Himeji Jô
and Schloss Schönbrunn at Schloss Schönbrunn
on November 15, 2024**

Dear Mr. Panholzer, CEO of the Schönbrunn Group,
Dear Mr. Palma, Director of Cultural Heritage at the BMAW,
Dear Mr. Kiyomoto, Mayor of Himeji,
Honored Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a great pleasure to attend this historic ceremony of signing of the Twinning Statement between two extraordinary symbols of culture, tradition, and heritage: Japan's Himeji Jô and Austria's Schloss Schönbrunn. I am aware that next year during the Osaka-Kansai Expo, these two institutions will officially finalize their partnership in Himeji, only about an hour's distance from the Expo site. Being one of the first persons to be consulted about the possible partnership for Himeji Jô, I am so happy that this day has come. I would like to express my deep appreciation and respect to all those who have contributed to making today's signing a reality and hope that this partnership will bring us even greater potential of cooperation between Japan and Austria.

In fact, from the moment I heard about Himeji Jô's intention to seek its partner, my instinctive perception fell on Schloss Schönbrunn. Linguistically, the equivalent word for "Shiro" or Jô in Japanese must be "Schloss" in German. The most valuable and beautiful "Schloss" that I know is been Schönbrunn, which, in its historical, cultural and architectural value, matches that of Himeji. Sometimes you come across in German "Burg Himeji" as its translation for Himeji Jô. By the same token, "Schloss Schönbrunn" is often translated into Japanese as "Schönbrunn Kyû(den)". In both cases, there is a slight difference in the nuance used in the wording. It is for this reason that I am using the original language "Himeji Jô" and "Schloss Schönbrunn" as the signatories of the Statement, particularly when considering the unique histories of the two edifices. Both edifices have not been a mere military "fortress" but have had the function of a

cultural and administrative center, a residence of the ruling family and clans, and a workplace of art and culture.

Moreover, I have seen many similarities and potentials for expanding cooperation in the future. For example, both sites have a stunningly beautiful garden, a zoo and an aquarium which have unique characteristics. When it comes to music, I am always overwhelmed by the open-air summer concert at Schönbrunn, which may offer another platform of cooperation. I can equally imagine that, at Himeji Jō, Noh and other traditional theater performances can be held.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to add one more value that brings Himeji Jō and Schloss Schönbrunn more closely together, namely: Himeji Jō has a record of receiving many Austrian visitors from 1914 onwards. In fact, they were the k. & k. prisoners of war from World War I who were fighting with their k. & k. Navy ship Kaiserin Elisabeth for the Germans in Tsingtao. There is a famous story about the first performance of Beethoven's 9th symphony in Japan by German prisoners of war at that time. But Himeji also had a camp for Austrian prisoners of war which was later moved to a nearby town Aonogahara. Himeji Jō might, therefore, have been their favorite recreation site, in addition to the opportunities for many creative activities such as making sausages, baking apple strudels and playing music. Kaiserin Elisabeth, by the way, was the ship which brought an Austrian envoy on board to Japan in 1869 to sign the Japan-Austrian Friendship and Trade Treaty, officially opening diplomatic relationship between our two countries. Today's signing reminds us all how history repeats itself, doesn't it?

Now, to sum up: Let me express my best wishes for both Schloss Schönbrunn and Himeji Jō – the latter known also as the “Schloss of a great white egret” (Shirasagi), which also somehow resembles Schönbrunn with its “Gloriette”. Let us all hope that this partnership will provide further platforms for cooperation, as well as for withstanding challenges such as restoration, issues stemming from the climate change and overtourism. Let us also all hope that numerous opportunities for further strengthening exchanges will follow, which will be a valuable contribution to enhancing the friendly relations between Japan and Austria.

Thank you for your attention.