

Check Against Delivery

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Ryuta MIZUUCHI,
Ambassador of Japan to Austria,
at the Sayonara-Reception
on 12th December 2024**

Dear Ursula (Government Commissioner for Expo 2025 Osaka-Kansai),
Dear Dr. Ferrero-Waldner (Former foreign minister of Austria),
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished guests,
my dear friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, thank you all for coming to this event, despite the busy advent season. I'm happy to see you all for one more time here in Austria.

The piece of music you just heard is J-Pop, it's several years old by now but not very well known. Nevertheless, I hope you liked it. One of my favorite operas that I enjoyed in Vienna is Dvorak's Rusalka, and I love "The Song to the Moon", which is sung by the fairy in its early scenes. This piece is also a dedication of a (human) girl's emotion to the moon. I was wondering if there is any similarity felt in these songs despite their geographical and timewise distance, and I wanted to test it sometime during my service here, for example,

at the next reception to celebrate the Emperor's Birthday. This being no longer the case, I had it performed today, instead.

Later on, we will listen to another piece of music with a more international background. I will talk a little more about this later.

I will have served in Vienna for exactly two years, arriving on December 17, 2022, and departing also on next Tuesday, 17 December. This is my fourth posting to Vienna as a diplomat, but each time I was given no longer than 2 ½ years. Unfortunately for me, this fate has befallen me this time again.

Nevertheless, these two years have been incredibly fulfilling, enabling me either to host interesting events, or to be part of such events organized by my fellow colleagues, or counterparts on the Austrian side. I simply tried to carry out what I could, and I think I can say that I have left nothing undone.

Had I stayed longer, I would have continued that way – same as I have done so far. The fact that my days in Vienna have come to an end now does not affect the value of my performance. I am truly thankful to you all – for all the support and cooperation you rendered me, and for allowing me to feel sufficiently fulfilled.

Over these two years, every event and activity has had an impact – an impact that will hopefully last longer. Strengthening bilateral relations in economy and business has been at the top of my agenda. For that, I used two platforms, namely:

- ① Expo Osaka-Kansai 2025 and Austria's active participation in it and
- ② the Japan-Austrian bilateral Committee for Issues of the Future.

Considerable fruits were gained on both fronts, which I can share with many of my Austrian friends. There are ample anticipations to bring Japan-Austrian relations to an even higher level. For that, the Expo stands ready as a catalyst.

As for the Japan-Austrian Committee for Issues of the Future, we have successfully established a standard formula. Experts from both countries can regularly discuss issues of relevance regarding economy, business, or cutting-edge technologies. I believe this model can serve as a prototype not only for Japan-Austrian relations but also for future bilateral relations between Japan and other European countries.

Let me touch upon the current global issues. In these challenging times, marked mainly by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and North Korea's involvement in said conflict, coupled with numerous global challenges. I, thus, find it essential for us value-sharing partners to enhance cooperation – to strengthen security of our own, as well as that in the global context. Japan and Austria are, indeed, value-sharing partners and must lead the world by showing their example.

In light of this, I would like to leave you another artistic reflection that follows.

It is a performance of a Japanese masterpiece 「荒城の月」, "The Moon over the Ruined Fortress", composed by 滝廉太郎 and enriched by the interpretation of Leo Sirota, a Ukrainian-born, Vienna-educated Jewish musician, who found his safe haven as a music professor at the Tokyo National Academy of Music in early 1930's and thus escaped Nazi persecution. It represents the earliest Western-style music performed in Japan. We played it at this year's Emperor's birthday reception in February, and this I would like to leave behind as a token of my service in Vienna.

To me, it sounds like a mix of diverse DNA, symbolizing our quest for art and culture in peace. I dedicate this music to all those over the world who are fighting for justice and the rule of law, and an international order as a basis of our mutual understanding.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my wife, who has supported me not only during these past two years but throughout most of my career as a diplomat. Not only have I been unable to achieve the accomplishments I mentioned earlier without her support, but her own self has been another icon of bonds that connect Japan and Austria together.

Let me also call upon my executive kitchen chef, Jaide, to come closer here. She is from Zambia where I was Ambassador. She joined us here in Vienna and helped me from behind. She mastered the art of Japanese cuisine remarkably as many of you have experienced. As she is graduating from Vienna with another remarkable performance today, I ask you to offer a signal of recognition to her.

So, I say "Sayonara". Do you know, by the way, that this is not a complete sentence? "Sayonara" means something like, "If that's the way it must be... (wenn es wirklich so sein muss...)" without ending the sentence. It is a completion without ending. That's what Japanese people feel genetically when we say this. So, I think in this sense I'm saying to you "Sayonara". It means that our encounter that once started here will continue somewhere else in the world.

Once again, thank you all for being with us here today. Servus and Bussi to you all.