

Belgian King's Day

PUBLICITY

Princess to lead multifaceted mission in Dec.

By Roxane de Bilderling
Ambassador of Belgium

This year, the celebration of the Belgian King's Day in Japan comes at a time that is filled with a lot of excitement and anticipation for the Belgian Economic Mission that will be coming in December. Her Royal Highness, Princess Astrid of Belgium, representing HM King Philippe, will lead a delegation of no less than 575 members, all eager to start new cooperation with Japan or deepen their existing links with this country. During one week, members of this mission will visit Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka and Kyoto. In Tokyo, there will be several bilateral contacts with the authorities.



Roxane de Bilderling

The composition of the delegation is a good reflection of the diversity and richness of our bilateral relations: companies from a wide range of sectors, as well as business federations, universities, cultural actors and official representatives from the Belgian federal government and the three regions (Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia), all under the leadership of the Princess. This mission could not come at a better time: Japan recently reopened its borders and the international context has highlighted, more than ever, how much we need to work together and find common solutions to address fundamental challenges in our societies, such as the fight against climate change, the need to secure sustainable and reliable sources of energy, and the absolute necessity to develop resilient supply chains and ensure our economic security, while enabling our populations to live in a healthy, peaceful, secure and stimulating environment.

In all of this, Belgium and Japan are partners of choice. During this economic mission, we have the ambition to raise the bar even a little higher by fo-



Belgian King Philippe and Queen Mathilde with their four children

ocusing on the areas where we can do more together. An entire day will be dedicated to the decarbonization of our economy, looking at investments and recent developments in hydrogen and offshore wind energy as well as the role of artificial intelligence. Joint research and innovation in life sciences and the chemical industry for a sustainable and healthy future will also figure very highly on the agenda, as this is an increasingly important sector in our bilateral economic relations. There will be discussions on how to digitalize public services while maintaining a high level of reliability and security, how to innovate in our automotive sector to respond to the challenges of smart mobility, and how to increase our academic cooperation and look for new perspectives and funding in the internationalization of higher education in the post-COVID context. An academic seminar will be devoted to

the historical significance of the 1920s donation of books by the Japanese Emperor to a Belgian university.

Many events will provide an excellent opportunity for interlocutors from both countries to meet and exchange experiences, projects, and ideas, such as high-level lunches focused on investments and a meeting between the two major business federations from each country. Moreover, success-story testimonies will be shared and some agreements will be signed between Belgian and Japanese companies or institutions. Several company visits will also be organized, showcasing their innovation or highlighting their Japan-Belgium partnership. A seminar will be dedicated to the expectations of young students towards the gender equality situation in the business world.

Finally, there will be several cultural events, such as the opening of a beautiful exhibition

of the sculptures of renowned Belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon and the traditional Belgian Beer Weekend in Shinjuku! At the opening of this festival, Belgian jazz musicians Jef Neve and Teus Nobel will be giving a special performance dedicated to Toots Thielemans, the famous Belgian harmonica player who would have been 100 years old this year. It will be one of the various events in which the excellent



The Brussels Flower Carpet is held every other summer at the Grand Place of Brussels, a UNESCO World Heritage site in the center of the Belgian capital.

food and drink culture from Belgium will be showcased. Last but not least, video gaming will have its share with an exciting and collaborative Game Jam, where Belgian-Japanese teams will compete to create the best video game.

It is easily understandable that this mission will represent a fantastic opportunity to highlight the various sectors that make Belgium-Japan relations so rich

and diverse, and we are extremely pleased to welcome such an important delegation. Beyond this important visit, we will continue to work on the dynamic exchanges further, for even stronger, warmer and more cordial Belgian-Japan friendship links.

More information can be found on the following website <https://www.belgianeconomicmission.be/> (available from Nov. 17)

Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day



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Congratulations to the People of Belgium on Their King's Day



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