EU-Japan relations

2023/2107(INI) - 23/11/2023 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Reinhard BÜTIKOFER (Greens /EFA, DE) on EU-Japan relations.

The EU and Japan will celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations in 2024. The EU-Japan relationship is one of exceptionally like-minded partners, built on a solid basis of shared values, democracy, free trade, common goals and mutually compatible interests, making Japan one of the EU's most important and trusted partners globally.

Pointing out that the EU and Japan together account for almost 25 % of global GDP, Members stated that the partnership can and should play an important role in helping to shape a peaceful, rules-based, inclusive, just, sustainable and prosperous international order.

Cooperation

The report encouraged both the EU and Japan to demonstrate the required **political will** to ratify the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA). It pointed out that the EU, including its agencies and financial institutions, also needs to cooperate very closely with Japan in the G20, the WTO, the UN and its specialised agencies, the UNFCCC, international standardisation organisations and financial institutions and other international formats in the pursuit of peace, maritime security, non-proliferation and the resilience to hybrid threats, as well as of human rights, prosperity, the rule of law and the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Members welcomed the important steps taken by the Japanese Government and the Republic of Korea to build a future-oriented relationship, as both countries are critically important like-minded strategic partners of the EU. They recognised Japan's grave concerns about the threat posed by North Korea's unlawful ballistic missile programmes and increasing belligerence.

The report strongly appreciated Japan's robust and unwavering support, including USD 7.6 billion of financial assistance and grant aid for Ukraine in support of its self-defence against Russia's war of aggression, especially through the delivery of transport vehicles, bulletproof vests and mine-clearing equipment.

Defence

The report highlighted that both the EU and Japan's enhanced defence policy frameworks provide new opportunities for cooperation, including on securing sea lines of communication, combating piracy and terrorism, and upholding freedom of navigation in the region. Japan's participation in the EUNAVFOR ATALANTA operation military exercise was welcomed.

Members proposed the creation of an EU/NATO/AP4 (Japan/Korea/Australia/New Zealand) security dialogue format and encouraged the European External Action Service to post a military attaché in Tokyo.

Environment

The committee regretted the fact that the EU-Japan Green Alliance of 2021 still remains a largely unfulfilled promise. The report noted that Japan has expressed its continued commitment to enhance mutual environmental ambition at national and multilateral levels in line with the EU-Japan Green

Alliance. However, they would welcome a more active role in this regard from the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation and the EU-Japan Business Round Table, particularly on recycling.

Energy

The report called for the acceleration of EU-Japan energy cooperation, particularly in the areas of liquefied natural gas, electricity market reform and innovative renewable energy technologies. It stressed the need to enhance the EU-Japan dialogue towards energy security, advocating a green transition and reducing dependence on totalitarian regimes for basic supply chains.

Human rights

Lastly, the report emphasised the human rights dialogue, where the EU and Japan can discuss, for example, the death penalty, which still exists in Japan and which the EU opposes fundamentally, and other human rights issues of mutual interest. Members also reiterated their concern about parental child abduction.