EU-Japan relations

2023/2107(INI) - 13/12/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 559 votes to 32, with 44 abstentions, a resolution on EU-Japan relations.

Japan is the EU’s closest strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific region. Both sides share a very broad range of values and goals. Parliament strongly emphasised the EU’s interest in deepening and broadening this partnership bilaterally and also in plurilateral and multilateral contexts. It pointed out that the EU and Japan together account for almost 25 % of global GDP, 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

Acknowledging the key role played by the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement and Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), Parliament encouraged the EU and Japan to demonstrate the required political will to ratify the SPA, calling for the full implementation of both agreements.

While welcoming the excellent cooperation within the G7, particularly on economic resilience and economic security, Parliament stressed that the EU must also work closely with Japan within the G20, the WTO, the United Nations and its specialised agencies, under the UNFCCC, in international standard-setting bodies and international financial institutions, and in other international fora, in the service of peace, maritime security, non-proliferation and resilience to hybrid threats, as well as human rights, prosperity, the rule of law and the achievement of the UN's sustainable development goals.

Members noted with interest Japan's efforts to promote a reliable structure of regional stability guided by the concept of a secure and open Indo-Pacific region. They welcomed the important steps taken by the Japanese Government and the Republic of Korea to build a forward-looking relationship. They also acknowledged Japan's serious concerns about the threat posed by North Korea's illegal ballistic missile programmes and its growing belligerence.

Parliament also intends to work with Japan on an ongoing basis to oppose China's overly assertive policies towards its neighbours.

Defence

Parliament 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.

Parliament called for a **comprehensive security partnership** between the EU and Japan as the basis for enhanced consultations, common exercises, shared defence research and development and work on joint contingency planning for dangerous crises.

Economic security

Members proposed an economic security **dialogue** in the context of the EU-Japan High Level Economic Dialogue. They pointed out the huge relevance of international cooperation on the governance and standardisation of digital services and trade in digital goods, including binding international rules, in particular with a view to data security.

Environment

Members regretted the fact that the EU-Japan Green Alliance of 2021 still remains a largely unfulfilled promise. They 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

Parliament 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 resolution 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. They proposed the creation of an EU-Japan young leaders forum on global partnership in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.