

December 2015

The 24th German-Japanese Forum

Dear Chancellor Merkel,

Dear Prime Minister Abe,

The 24th German-Japanese Forum met in Tokyo from Oct. 27 to Oct. 29, 2015 to discuss issues of mutual concern. The German and Japanese participants included parliamentarians of the governing and opposition parties and senior representatives from business, the media, academia, think tanks and the diplomatic service of both countries.

We would like to thank you both sincerely for the hospitality your governments once more extended to us at the opening reception given by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Miki Yamada at Mita Kaigisho and at the reception given by H.E. Ambassador Dr. Hans Carl von Werthern at the Ambassador's residence. The German members of the Forum particularly appreciated the opportunity to meet with you, Mr. Prime Minister, at the end of our discussions and convey some initial conclusions directly. We would like to follow up with this letter, which summarizes our deliberations and highlights the most important conclusions.

Our discussions this time took place against the background of important changes in the legal foundations of Japan's security and defence policy and the dramatic increases in migration to Europe, specifically to Germany. In the first session ("Domestic Challenges and Political Response") we exchanged views on recent political developments in our two countries and regions. For Germany, the most salient concern was the economic, social and political implications of the recent influx of refugees. The explanation of the present situation in Germany met with particular interest on the Japanese side. Stark differences emerged between German and Japanese perspectives on immigration, with Japanese participants generally expressing skepticism about Japan's ability and willingness to open up its society for immigrants. For Japan, the dominant theme was the re-interpretation of the Constitution and subsequent legislation that will enable Japan to participate, under certain conditions, both in collective security and collective defence activities. This theme was taken up further in the third session on security in East Asia.

In the second session (“Growth and Well-being in an Ageing Society - Potentials of Social Innovation and Limitations”), we discussed the implications of our ageing societies in work, employment and life. As noted already, there were marked differences between the two sides with regard to immigration. We discussed the economic implications of accepting immigrants and differences of the attitudes towards the immigrants and diversity. We agreed that demographic changes made it imperative for both our societies to fully mobilize the potential of women for all aspects of work and life in the future of our countries. Similarly, we also recommend greater efforts to make use of the experience senior citizens can contribute.

As our working populations will shrink due to demographic shifts, technological advances will fundamentally reshape work. Those two trends are likely to interact heavily, and we will therefore have to prepare both for a smaller workforce and for radically different demands on those who are active in the labour force. Innovation, creativity and new social leadership skills will become particularly important. We recommend greater exchanges between small and medium-sized manufactures in both countries, as we share a rich history and experiences in manufacturing in local regions.

In session three (“Foreign and Security Policy, More Active Role of Japan and Germany”), the starting point for our discussion was the observation that both Germany and Japan recently have taken major strides towards assuming greater international responsibilities, both in their respective regions and beyond. For Germany, the instability in the Middle East and Northern Africa is of urgent concern, as it nurtures the massive movements of refugees. We shared our assessment of Russia’s recent foreign policies that represent a fundamental departure from the past, confronting both our countries with new uncertainties and risks. We **recommend** that Germany and Japan continue to consult closely on how to respond to those challenges, bearing in mind that security developments in Europe will have security implications for East Asia, and vice versa.

The second major issue in this session was geopolitical challenges in East Asia. The rise of China threatens to destabilize the regional security order if it is not managed carefully. Germany and the European Union have important roles to play in this. Germany and Japan share an important interest in the freedom of navigation, and your governments will no doubt consult closely on the respective contributions of our countries to protect that shared interest.

More generally, the European Union has a huge stake in regional peace and stability in East Asia, and we **recommend** that you, Madame Chancellor, use your influence within the EU to reach a united European stance towards East Asian developments. The European experience with co-operative security policies in the context of the Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which Germany will chair from January 2016 on for two years, may have some relevance for East Asia. We therefore **recommend** that your two governments take the lead in working for a closer dialogue on co-operative security within, but also between our two regions.

Thank you again for supporting the work of the German-Japanese Forum. We sincerely appreciate the personal interest both of you take in our discussions on the challenges faced by our two countries.

Respectfully Yours,

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German Chairman

Yuzaburo Mogi
Japanese Chairman

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