

JFTC NEWS

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New Years Reception



(From left to Right in the Reception Line)
Mr. K. Miyahara (Chairman), Mr. M. Sasaki (Vice Chairman),
Mr. T. Tsuji (Vice Chairman), Mr. S. Yasutake (Vice Chairman),
Mr. U. Niwa (Vice Chairman), Mr. S. Shimizu (Vice Chairman)

JFTC held the new years reception on January 11 at the Tokyo Kaikan. It was attended by more than 300 guests, including those from government, the business sector, and members of overseas organizations in Japan.

Chairman Miyahara gave the opening address, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Economy, Trade and Industry, Taiichiro Nishikawa, was the guest speaker. After the toast, given by Chairman of JETRO Noboru Hatakeyama, attendees enjoyed informal conversation.

Chairman Miyahara's Opening Address (Full Text)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to wish you all a very happy new year.

I would like to thank all of you who have taken the time to attend today, including those of you in government, government service, and the business world, and those of you here as representatives of other countries and their organizations.

As always, I would like to thank you all most deeply for your continued understanding and support of the activities of JFTC.

We have at last entered the twenty-first century. I am sure that you all felt a great sense of anticipation and opportunity while greeting the new year.

As we advance into the twenty-first century, I am sure that the question of how we are going to adapt to new trends in globalization is going to become an even more significant theme.

As this globalization becomes more prominent, barriers between markets will become progressively lower, with the role of business becoming even greater than what it has been up until now.

JFTC is active in worldwide business, so we are very aware of how business activities are tied to the reality of “peace and prosperity.” I feel that we need to have a vision and the resolution to take action towards achieving this end.

Therefore, this year the JFTC has decided to take the following measures.

Firstly, as we are involved in business, we are actively voicing our requests and submitting proposals regarding governmental policies that have a strong influence on the business environment, covering issues such as taxation systems and free trade agreements.

Secondly, we are responding to the increase in functions and roles that has been demanded of the business world, and are vigorously adapting to the computerization of trade and business with such measures as the adoption of Electronic Data Interchange in trade and finance.

Thirdly, we are actively contributing towards social action programs. In April of last year, we founded Action for Better International Community, and we are making arrangements for it to be declared a non-profit organization. This organization sends people who have retired from Shosha (trading companies) to work as volunteers both in Japan and overseas. We have more than 850 participants registered, and they are already active.

We have been using the slogan “make the world rich through trade,” and it is the activities such as those I have just introduced that will bring this to reality.

Again, I’d like to ask you to continue to lend your understanding and support to JFTC and its activities.

This year, at the start of the twenty-first century, I’d like to take this chance to fervently wish that this new year is a prosperous one for you all.

Request for the Early Conclusion of a Social Security Arrangement with Belgium

Recently, this group’s Human Resources Committee (led by Bin Ueda, Mitsubishi Corporation Personnel Department General Manager) put together a package of proposals, and presented them to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (January 30) and the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare (January 31).

The issue of duplicate pension payments for Japanese abroad is a problem not just for Japan’s companies, but also for foreign nationals working in Japan, and as the global economy continues to develop, has become a pending issue for corporations both in Japan and abroad.

JFTC has been making efforts to urge our government to address this problem by concluding bilateral agreements with other countries, and so far, agreements have been concluded with Great Britain

and Germany, while discussions are under way with France and the United States. In particular, the discussions in November last year with the United States government came about as a result of Koji Furukawa, Vice President of Mitsubishi Corporation, making representations to the North American Office of the Foreign Ministry on behalf of the Vice Chairman of JFTC, with the aim of starting negotiations in a timely manner, and Chairman Miyahara of JFTC visiting the United States Ambassador to Japan, to request prompt conclusion of a U.S.-Japan pension agreement.

This request is being put forth with the intention of taking advantage of the planned visit to Japan of the Prime Minister of Belgium at the end of February, and has as its aim the requesting the early conclusion of a social security arrangement with Belgium.

The Translation of the JFTC's Request

January 2001

Foreign Minister

Yohei Khono

Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare

Chikara Sakaguchi

Japan Foreign Trade Council, Inc.

Chairman Kenji Miyahara

The rapid globalization of the world economy has led to an increasingly large number of people living and working abroad, and the cost burden for those who are required to contribute towards pension systems in both Japan and their country of residence has become a major issue. Therefore, our organization recently put together "A Request for Early Conclusion of Social Security Arrangements with Foreign Countries" (September 14, 1999), with the intention of solving this issue, by requesting a prompt conclusion of pension agreements with other countries.

Presently, the government, has drawn up agreements with Germany and Great Britain, and started negotiations with France and the United States. We would furthermore like to ask for your continued cooperation in drawing up pension agreements with other countries.

Therefore, as His Excellency Mr. Guy Verhofstadt, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium is shortly to pay a visit to Japan, we would like to take this opportunity to request that the governments of both countries hold talks aimed at the prompt conclusion of a Japan-Belgium pension agreement.

In addition, pension payments in both Japan and Belgium are high when compared to other countries, so in light of the fact that pension agreements have been concluded with Germany and Great Britain, and are underway with France, this has put an additional burden on business ventures between both countries. We therefore humbly ask for your assistance in maintaining and increasing the economic interchange between Japan and Belgium.

Welcome Luncheon for Guy Verhofstadt — Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium



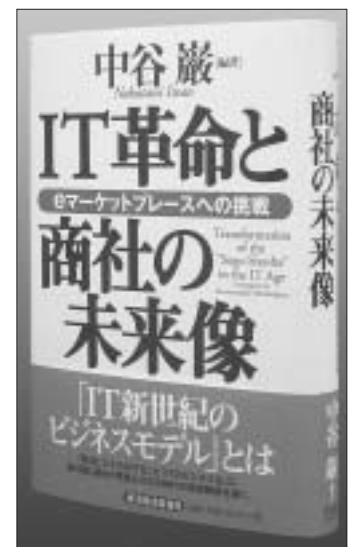
On Thursday, February 2 while on a visit to Japan as a guest of the Japanese government, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium Guy Verhofstadt attended a welcome luncheon held at the Tokyo Kaikan. This was held by JFTC, Nikkeiren, Keidanren, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Keizai Doyukai. Approximately 40 people from the business community attended, with Vice Chairman Yasutake attending on behalf of JFTC. After the opening address by Hiroshi Okuda, Chairman of Nikkeiren, Prime Minister Verhofstadt gave an address, stating “I have held discussions with Prime Minister Mori about issues surrounding social security costs and the conclusion of a social security arrangement with Japan, and we would like to start negotiations forthwith.”

Transformation of the “Sogo-Shosha” in the IT Age / strategies for the successful eMarketplace

In the midst of the continuing IT revolution, we are paying close attention to the efforts of Shosha to find new business models. JFTC has selected elite members from each company in the group to form a research group, which has been discussing this data. Recently, the research group collected and published their findings in Japanese.

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Event

Welcome Luncheon for His Majesty King Harald V of Norway

While on a visit to Japan as a guest of the Japanese government, His Majesty King Harald V of Norway attended a welcome luncheon held at the Hotel New Otani on Tuesday, March 27. The luncheon was held by JFTC, Keidanren, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nikkeiren and Keizai Doyukai. Approximately 40 people from the business community attended the luncheon, with 450 people attending the seminar organized by the Norway embassy.

In his address His Majesty said, “The last ten to fifteen years has seen a broadening of the relationship between both our countries. In particular, our relationship as regards fisheries has developed particularly well, with Japan being a vital market for Norway’s marine products. In addition, tourism is also showing healthy growth.” In summing up, His Majesty said “I believe that a desire for mutual benefit, having common points of interest, and the respective special characteristics of both our countries are the best base for the creation of a profitable partnership. I come to Japan with nothing but the deepest respect and admiration for Japan’s society, culture, and myriad successes. I pray that the strong relationship between Japan and Norway will continue to grow.”

