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Emperor and PM Kishida's New Year messages

Emperor Naruhito [delivered](#) his customary New Year's Day remarks on 1 January via pre-recorded television message, accompanied by Empress Masako and Princess Aiko, where he expressed hope that people would support each other with compassion, even as he noted with regret the wars and natural calamities causing loss of life throughout the world. While praying that the New Year would bring brightness and hope to people in Japan and the world, the Emperor expressed concern for those struggling to rebuild after natural disasters in 2023, as well as those who are struggling to make ends meet due to the economic downturn caused by rapid food inflation in Japan. Finally, he said "his heart ached for the many lives lost" in wars and conflicts around the world, and underlined the importance of mutual understanding and compassion as fundamental pillars of a peaceful world.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also [delivered](#) his customary New Year's remarks on 1 January, striking a more assertive tone in foreign policy even while defending his record in domestic policy and promising reform in political organisations after a massive kickback scandal engulfed the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) he heads. In his address, he said he would exert "leadership unique to Japan" through summit diplomacy in order to solve international issues, citing the Russo-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Hamas conflict as examples. He also promised to defend the territorial air, land and sea space of Japan, and promised to take all possible

measures to alleviate the economic distress many Japanese are currently experiencing due to rapid food inflation. On the topic of the kickback scandal, he promised to take all possible steps to "restore the public's trust" even as he indirectly countered calls in the media for his resignation by stating that "stability in politics" was "indispensable" in order to "facilitate the promotion of policies".

Foreign Minister Kamikawa's Europe, North America & West Asia trip

Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoko Kamikawa embarked on a two-week long diplomatic trip to Europe, North America and West Asia between 5 and 18 January, visiting (in order) [Ukraine](#), [Poland](#), [Finland](#), [Sweden](#), [the Netherlands](#), [the United States of America](#), [Canada](#), [Germany](#) and [Turkey](#) to hold bilateral meetings with her counterparts as well as pay respects to respective heads of state. At Ukraine, she [announced](#) Japan's additional contribution of 37 million US dollars to a fund instituted by NATO to assist Ukraine in its efforts to repel Russian forces, to be used in purchasing drone detection systems and other defensive equipment. She also announced Tokyo's commitment to providing five mobile gas turbine power generators to help the citizens of Kyiv during the winter. In Poland, she [briefed](#) the new government of President Donald Tusk on her visit to Ukraine and reiterated Japan's support for Poland and its efforts to take care of Ukrainian refugees. In Finland and Sweden, she [announced](#) a new initiative launched by her ministry that will aim to boost its relations with the Scandinavian countries as a whole across four pillars: the

Arctic and oceans, gender equality, security and defence cooperation and green, digital and science technologies. In the Netherlands, she [met with](#) the president of the International Court of Justice at The Hague and conveyed Japan's support for the court's functioning and promising to encourage other countries to accept the ICJ's compulsory jurisdiction.

On the North American leg of her trip, Kamikawa met her [American](#) and [Canadian](#) counterparts to discuss and confirm each other's views on the topical issues of the day, as well as to declare their support for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. In Germany, she [met](#) with the President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), a UN body, to emphasise Japan's commitment to UNCLOS, and to express hope that ITLOS would continue to be a "guardian" of the international maritime order. Finally, In Turkey, she and her counterpart [agreed](#) to work together to rebuild war-torn Ukraine, calm down the Gaza situation, and finalise a bilateral economic cooperation agreement.

METI collaborates with Central Asian countries

Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) signed memorandums of cooperation with the governments of [Uzbekistan](#) and [Kazakhstan](#) (9 January) as well as [Turkmenistan](#) (22 January) in the fields of decarbonisation and energy extraction. Under the terms of the MoU, Japan is [expected](#) to provide renewable energy and energy-saving technologies to the three countries, especially those relating to wind-power, hydrogen and ammonia-

based fuel, and carbon capture. For Turkmenistan, Japan is also [expected](#) to assist in the formulation of a decarbonisation plan, and Itochu Corporation and Kawasaki Heavy Industries will work with the country's state-run chemical maker to build a methane recovery plant, which is to be used as raw material for gasoline. The MoUs also call for cooperation in upgrading the Central Asian countries' aging thermal power sector by the introduction of advanced Japanese technology. Japan is seeking to finalise similar agreements with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the near future.