



Seul le discours prononcé fait foi

**Visite d'État
S.A.R. le Grand-Duc au Japon
du 27 au 29 novembre 2017**

**Discours du Vice-Premier ministre, ministre de l'Économie, Étienne Schneider,
au Luxembourg-Japan Business Forum
le lundi 27 novembre 2017**

Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to say that it is always a pleasure to be here in Japan. Indeed, every time I visit this country I am amazed by the kind hospitality of its people and the warm welcome we are offered.

The relations between Japan and Luxembourg have always been excellent. It is a relationship which over all these years has been defined by mutual recognition, shared values and a joint ambition to grow and help our people prosper.

Yet, not only does the State Visit allow us to celebrate the longstanding diplomatic relations between our two countries and to strengthen the ties between our two monarchies, but it also enables us to intensify our economic relations.

Needless to say that Japan is a major economic partner for Luxembourg. The strength of our bilateral relationship is duly reflected in the latest trade figures, which reveal tremendous developments. The bilateral trade of goods between our two countries has almost doubled in value displaying a growing trend for 2017 and making Japan Luxembourg's leading partner in Asia.

The strong presence of important Japanese companies within Luxembourg, such as Fanuc, Carlex (Central Glass), and Rakuten, to name a few, as well as the activities of Luxembourgish companies in Japan, such as Cargolux, Paul Wurth and Arcelor Mittal are a testament to the robust investment ties. Yet, despite the importance of these mutual investments, their number could be bigger, as there are lots of opportunities for Japanese companies to invest in Luxembourg and vice versa.

Your Royal Highness,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to focus on some of the unique features of Luxembourg.

Thanks to its strategic location, Luxembourg is a major gateway to the European single market of 500 million customers. We have continuously sought to improve our ranking as multimodal and intercontinental **logistics hub** in Europe, especially concerning air and rail freight based activities. These efforts are bearing fruits, as best proven by the decision of the Japanese company Fanuc to settle its European distribution centre to Luxembourg, thereby confirming the country's potential as top-notch European logistics hub.

Yet, we do not limit ourselves to the transportation on earth.

Instead we also very much focus our efforts on harnessing the great potential which lies beyond our earthly borders, namely in **space**. We thus no longer follow the slogan "only the sky is the limit" but instead "only space is the limit". In this sense, we strive to become a European hub for space exploration and for the extraction and use of space resources.

Through the recent adoption of a dedicated space law, we aim to ensure stability and a high level of protection for investors, explorers and miners. These measures have led to the implantation of important players within the space sector in Luxembourg. We are proud to count a very promising Japanese company amongst them, namely ispace.

I will have the pleasure to open later this week a space conference focusing on space resources and satellite technologies in the Tenku Planetarium, a very suitable location.

Last but not least, I am looking forward to the signing during this visit of an Memorandum of Cooperation between the Japanese and Luxembourg governments, paving the way for joining our forces in the field of space exploration and space resources.

Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Luxembourg also strives to support its industrial activity especially by aiming to position itself as a premium location for life sciences, clean technologies and automotive R&D activities.

With regards to **life sciences**, Luxembourg's biomedical ecosystem is driven by a young and very dynamic public research community with a strong expertise and capability in key strategic areas such as cancer, immunology and neurodegenerative diseases.

Already an important centre for the **automotive industry's** supply chain with an exceptional business environment, Luxembourg now focuses on strengthening its R&D activities given the emergence of smart mobility and connected cars.

Our economies and societies are undergoing tremendous changes at the moment. We are witnessing a true paradigm shift regarding our economic systems as we know them today. Many of these changes are fuelled by new technologies and innovative ways to do business and interact.

Therefore, Luxembourg is currently setting up a new **strategy of sustainable and qualitative development**, relying on new economic and social models and taking advantage of digitalization.

It is part of our pioneering effort to prepare the country for a real paradigm shift, based on a digitalization of society and of the economy coupled with a transition from a linear economic model towards a circular one.

Our aim is to create a smart nation, both in terms of digitalization as well as in terms of economic sustainability. In this context, Japan's valuable support for this project by sharing its advanced skills and technologies is critical. I firmly believe that these initiatives provide significant opportunities for further collaboration between our two countries.

Your Royal Highness,
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is and will remain an open country and I warmly invite you to visit us and discover more about our charming country. We are indeed very pleased that in the last years Luxembourg has witnessed a substantial increase of Japanese tourists. We obviously hope that today's tourism seminar and the buzz around the Luxembourg pop-up café – which I will have the privilege to open later today - will spark further interest amongst our Japanese friends in choosing Luxembourg as their next holiday destination.

Let me conclude by underscoring that this country offers many possibilities to Luxembourg companies, just as Luxembourg offers many interesting opportunities to businesses from here. This will undoubtedly be reflected in the following speeches and ensuing sessions, to which I am very much looking forward.

Given our cooperation on so many levels, it is clear that the ties between Japan and Luxembourg are strong and I am confident that this visit will contribute to enhancing these bonds even further.

I thank you for your attention.