

(Anniversary special)

EU special

In time of flux, EU loyal to founding principles

VIORLESTICIOAIA-BUDURA
AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO JAPAN

It is a pleasure to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of Europe Day, the day in 1950 when then-French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman set out a vision for a more united Europe to banish the specter of war from the continent.

This year is a particularly meaningful one for those who follow the history of the European project. On March 25, the European Union marked 60 years since the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the first step toward a united Europe. We have since enjoyed decades of unprecedented peace, prosperity and security. The contrast to the first half of the 20th century could not be greater.

However, we are living in unpredictable times, as recent political events around the



world have shown. In Europe itself, the U.K. has given formal notice that it would leave the EU. Amid such great uncertainty, the 60th anniversary is an opportunity not only to reaffirm our commitment to the

values and objectives on which the European project is founded, but to also take pragmatic and ambitious steps forward, to make the EU stronger and more resilient through even greater unity and solidarity.

In Japan, the completion of the Chinese zodiac calendar's 60-year cycle is seen as a time to celebrate past achievements and usher in a new stage of life. I find this *kan-reki*, a concept of rebirth, very much reflects where the EU is at this moment in time.

Some things will certainly remain unchanged even after the U.K. withdraws from the EU. We will still be the world's second-largest economy and its biggest development and humanitarian aid donor. The EU will also continue to be a key player on the world stage, standing up for our core values such as democracy, multilateralism and respect for human rights.

In achieving these objectives, we are happy to have a strategic partner in Japan,

which is also firmly committed to these values. The two sides are working with renewed vigor to pursue both a strategic partnership agreement and a free trade agreement in the hope of concluding them as quickly as possible and thus taking this already fruitful bilateral relationship to a new level.

Together with the EU member states, we continuously expand our relationship with Japan, while also putting much time and effort into fostering grass-roots ties, through a wide range of projects such as our annual EU Film Days festival and European Higher Education Fair. We are cooperating closely with Japan in the area of gender equality, trying to ensure that women have the same chances in politics or business as men. It is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do, especially in an age of rapid innovation and change.



I am confident that our Japanese friends will continue to see the EU as a reliable and committed partner, so that we can redouble our collective efforts to strengthen the bilateral relationship and work together to maintain and strengthen the global order in an era of flux.

Federica Mogherini (left), EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, receives a lei of origami cranes from a student on April 11, 2016, after laying a wreath at Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima during her participation in the G-7 foreign ministers' meeting. EUROPEAN UNION



European leaders, including European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, take part in celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome in March. EUROPEAN UNION

Working together to strengthen, broaden bilateral trade

DANNY RISBERG
CHAIRMAN, EUROPEAN BUSINESS COUNCIL IN JAPAN (EBC)

2017 promises to be a significant year for the European Union. On top of major elections in several member states and the start of the Brexit negotiations, the union is also celebrating the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome.

The treaty was significant and a landmark: the first concrete step in a process to create an economic and political partnership in Europe that would bring peace and prosperity to a region hitherto troubled with conflict and instability. Amid all the noise and turmoil of the present day, it is easy to forget the enormity of the treaty's ambition and to underestimate its great achievement. Today many EU citizens take their personal freedom for granted, while enjoying unprecedented levels of health, wealth and security. The truth is,



there is much to celebrate.

The European business community joins in the celebrations. Companies operating in the EU — domestic and foreign — benefit enormously from its single market, its predictable, transparent rules and regulations and its open and expansive trade policy. Even so, this is no time for the EU to be

complacent. The European Commission has itself identified a raft of issues including an aging and shrinking population, long-term unemployment and the impact of climate change and new technologies, that must be addressed for the future to remain bright.

Of course, this list of issues is not unique to Europe: It would be familiar to any analyst of the Japanese economy, too. However, we have more in common than just that. The EU and Japan share a significant trade relationship — the EU ranks as Japan's third-largest trading partner while, for the EU, Japan ranks sixth. We also share a set of common values, such as respect for the environment and the rule of law; and — to remain prosperous — we share a deep need to succeed as providers of top-quality goods and services in a fiercely competitive world.

The sharing of so much common ground offers the EU and Japan a unique platform to achieve a mutual free-trade agreement/

economic partnership agreement capable of further growing the success and stability of our economies. A sufficiently ambitious and comprehensive agreement will allow us to overcome obstacles in our mutual trade; enable us to develop more competitive companies and products; and, at a time when protectionism threatens to stifle the very engines of economic growth, to lead and send a strong signal of support for fair and consistent rules and standards at the global level.

This is an agreement that Japan and the EU truly need. Starting negotiations in March 2013 and, four years and 18 rounds of negotiations later, tremendous progress has been made — but it is not enough. That is why the European Business Council in Japan has been urging Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and EU leaders to ensure the negotiations reach a successful conclusion by the end of 2017. In what is already a significant year, an EU-Japan FTA/EPA would really be something to celebrate!

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Nifco's group companies in EU



Nifco U.K. Ltd.
Durham Lane Eaglescliffe Stockton-on-Tees TS16 0PS, United Kingdom
Tel: +44-1642-672299 Fax: +44-1642-611004

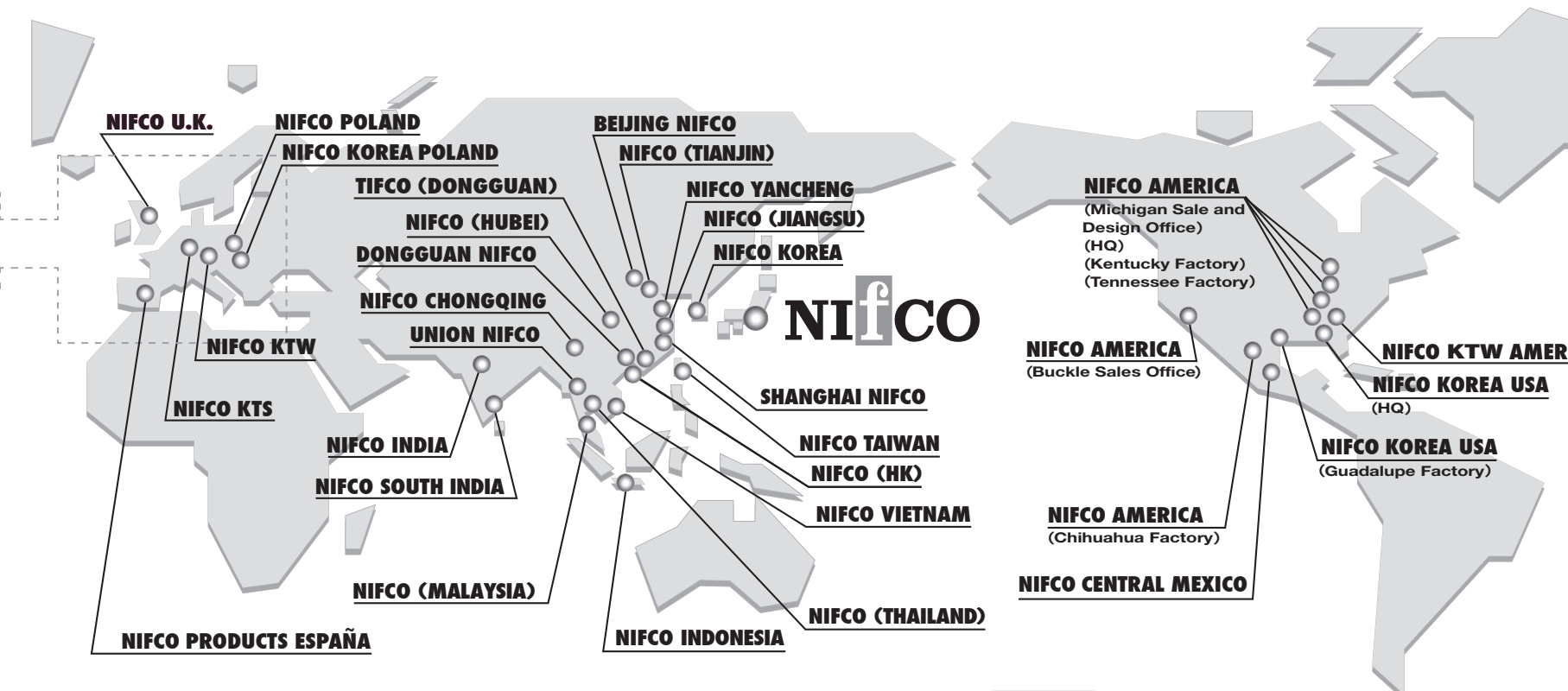
Nifco KTS GmbH
Lindgesfeld 9, D-42653 Solingen, Germany
Tel: +49-212-25830-10 Fax: +49-212-25830-30

Nifco KTW GmbH
Dettenheimer Str. 34, D-91781 Weissenburg, Bayern, Germany
Tel: +49-9141-8529-0 Fax: +49-9141-8529-68

Nifco Poland Sp. z o. o.
ul. Przemysłowa, 41-43, 58-100 Swidnica, Poland
Tel: +48-74-649-5500 Fax: +48-74-649-5503

Nifco Korea Poland Sp. z o. o.
ul. Wygoda 8, 44-240, Zory, Poland
Tel: +48-32-6211-390 Fax: +48-32-6211-399

Nifco Products España, S.L.U.
Bosch I Gimpera, 2-4 Pol. Ind. Santa Margarita II 08223
Terrassa Barcelona, Spain
Tel: +34-93-736-1800 Fax: +34-93-731-6265



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Head Office: 5-3 Hikarinooka, Yokosuka-shi, Kanagawa, 239-8560 Japan
Tel: (046) 839-0255

Tokyo Headquarters: 4-5-4 Shibaura, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 108-8522 Japan
Tel: (03) 5476-4850

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