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State visit – Belgium and Japan, a reunion under the sign of friendship and cooperation

This year, Belgium and Japan are celebrating 160 years of diplomatic relations. On this occasion, Their Majesties the King and Queen welcome Their Imperial Majesties the Emperor Naruhito of Japan and his wife Empress Masako for a two-day state visit to Belgium, from June 23rd to 24th, 2026, under the sign of friendship and cooperation in many fields.

Japan and Belgium share similar values, visions and interests, such as the preservation of the international order based on the rule of law and on international law, the maintenance of peace and security, and the fight against climate change. In a world marked by instability and great change, Belgium and Japan underline this crucial and lasting cooperation to face common threats.

Japan is also a major economic and trade partner for Belgium. More than 280 Japanese companies are based in our country and contribute to nearly 30,000 jobs, in sectors such as automotive, industry, logistics, chemicals and biotechnology. In addition, Japan is also a key market for Belgian exports outside the European Union: the country of the Rising Sun is Belgium's 25th largest customer and its 4th largest non-European supplier.

This State visit is therefore an opportunity to reaffirm the close ties between our two countries, which are also reflected in the special ties between the Belgian Royal Family and the Japanese Imperial Family.

Day 1

Tuesday, June 23rd, the first day of the visit, will be marked by the welcoming ceremonies. The Emperor and Empress will first be welcomed by the King and Queen at the Royal Palace in Brussels. This will be followed by a meeting with the mayor of Brussels, Philippe Close, at City Hall.

In the afternoon, the Emperor will be received by Prime Minister Bart De Wever at the Lambermont, in the presence of Foreign Minister Maxime Prévot. This will be followed by a meeting with representatives of the Chamber and the Senate in the Federal Parliament.

The day will end with the traditional State banquet at the Castle of Laeken.

Day 2

Wednesday, June 24th, will begin with a visit to the Castle of Namur, followed by a visit to the Citadel. The King and the Emperor will be welcomed by the Governor of the Province of Namur, Denis Mathen, and the mayor-in-title and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maxime Prévot. Located at the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse rivers, the Walloon capital is a place steeped in history, with a unique biotope. River transportation has, for centuries, played a crucial role in the economy and development of the country. Even today, inland waterways make it possible to create European transport corridors and play an important role in the energy transition and sustainable cross-border logistics. This theme is of particular interest to the Emperor, who, following his studies at the University of Oxford, specialised in the history of river transportation and inland waterways.

The afternoon will begin with a visit to Imec, the Belgian innovation centre and world leader in



microelectronics. The semiconductors that are developed there, are part of our daily lives: smartphones, cars, artificial intelligence, etc. They shape the world of today and tomorrow. Japan has been investing heavily in the development and production of cutting-edge electronic chips, making it a preferred partner of Imec for nearly 40 years. As such, Imec has developed more than 100 partnerships with Japanese research centers and companies.

The afternoon will continue with a visit to KU Leuven, the oldest university in Belgium, which brings together more than 60,000 students and 8,000 researchers. Thanks to numerous academic cooperation agreements, student and researcher exchanges between Belgian and Japanese universities are particularly dynamic. During the visit, a special interest will be paid to the East Asian Library. Indeed, after the university's general library was burned down during World War I, Japan made a major contribution to international efforts to rebuild and replenish the library's collections. Thousands of ancient Japanese works - dating from the 12th to the 19th century - were donated at the time and still stand today alongside the greatest masterpieces of Flemish culture.

The day will end with a visit to the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken and the Japanese Tower. This iconic tower was erected following the 1900 World Expo, with materials coming directly from Yokohama (Kanagawa Prefecture), with some elements even dating back to the Edo period. It will also be an opportunity to show the botanical richness of the park and the greenhouses to the Imperial Couple.

On Thursday 25 June, the King and Queen will officially bid farewell to the Imperial Couple at the Castle of Laeken, before they take off from Melsbroek Airport.

This visit underlines the close ties between Belgium and Japan as privileged partners for 160 years. It is an opportunity to confirm and strengthen our cooperation in many areas, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

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