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INTERVIEW

“Do not hesitate to knock the door of the JETRO Geneva office”

Interview with Mr. Shiro TAKEGAMI, the new Director General of JETRO Geneva

JETRO Geneva is pleased to introduce our new Director General, Mr. Shiro TAKEGAMI who took office in July succeeding Mr. Takashi Wada who returned to Japan after three years in Switzerland. Mr. Shiro TAKEGAMI has worked for more than twenty years for the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and has a solid experience working for national funding agencies. He answered our questions about his background and priorities for this new position.

Could you please introduce yourself to our readers?

I joined the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI, then METI) in 1992 after my graduation from Kyoto University. In the Japanese administration it is usual to change assignments every 2 years or so, hence, I have worked in 10 different positions over the last 28 years. Among others, I worked for the local government in the Kumamoto prefecture, as an economic attaché for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for some national funding agencies. Despite having spent the first 24 years of my life in Kyoto, people may say I am more like an Osaka



Mr. Takegami is Director General of JETRO Geneva since July 2021

person. My mother is indeed originally from there.

What do you mean by Osaka person?

In Japan, people from Osaka have the reputation of having a commercial mindset. Osaka was one of the Japan's main economic hubs for a long period before Tokyo become so large. Many famous Japanese companies are from Osaka. It is no surprise that JETRO has been present in Osaka since the creation of the organization.

Maybe those kind of differences between regions are less relevant today as one third of the Japanese population lives in the greater Tokyo area.

Is it your first experience abroad?

It is my third position abroad. I worked as an economic attaché for the Japanese embassy in Saudi Arabia and was a visiting researcher at the University of New Mexico in the USA. I have also travelled extensively around the world both for private or professional purposes. This said, most of my working experience focused on Asian countries. Europe is somewhat different.

I came to Switzerland once many years ago to attend a WTO negotiation. It was a short visit but I kept a positive impression of Switzerland.

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“Do not hesitate to knock the door of the JETRO Geneva office”

会見

INTERVIEW

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What have you learned heading a medical research funding agency during a pandemic?

I worked two years as managing director of the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED), one year before the COVID outbreak and one year with COVID. The agency is mostly focusing on long-term issues such as cancers and other diseases.

Nonetheless, our budget was doubled the second year because of COVID. Unfortunately, epidemics are something we have to face regularly. Now it is the Novel Coronavirus, but we had SARS or the H1N1. Ideally, research on the epidemics should be more regular, not only investing money to cope with epidemics once we face them. Of course, it is difficult to predict what or when the next one will be. Nonetheless, it is important to be better prepared.

Why is the governmental support to innovation so important?

Companies are very good at innovating where they see a short- to mid-term interest. They are looking for a return at some point. This said, it is also important for supporting and conducting research in areas for which there is not necessarily a foreseeable economic interest. In such cases, public investments are necessary.

It is also the role of the government to think about what society should be. For instance, the Japanese government was willing to promote

society 5.0, a society in which technology is improving people's lives in a transparent way with a merger of digital and non-digital. We are almost there. Today, many small innovations are improving our every-day life without us even knowing that the original project behind was financed by public money.

What was (or is) your first opinion of Switzerland?

When I took office last month, I started by visiting Geneva, Zurich and Bern, thinking that those three areas would concentrate most of the Swiss economy. In fact, I realized that Switzerland is very decentralized and so is its economy. Economically speaking, Switzerland is a large country with all regions having their own strengths and successful companies. I am looking forward to learning more about them not only the economic perspective but also the innovation one.

What are your priorities as Director General of JETRO Geneva?

We will continue our efforts to identify companies with innovative products that may fit the needs of Japanese society. I am thinking about Medtech which I know well as the experience at AMED, but they are many other industries that are interesting.

I am also interested in working with and supporting young and small companies. Of course, JETRO activity covers many areas and could support all companies, but I believe JETRO can do a lot for the

smaller ones that often lack resources and experience. When I say “young” I mean the mindset. For example, one can be over 60 years old and be very young in one's head.

During my time at JETRO Geneva from now on, I would also like to further develop our cooperation with companies in Lichtenstein as our office covers both countries.

We just had an intern from Lichtenstein who stayed with us for one week in August 2021. She helped us update our information about her country and identify interesting companies. We are very happy with the outcome of her work and sharing it through the website. It will be useful for our activities in Lichtenstein.

What are your hobbies?

What I like the most are nice discussions while enjoying good food with sometimes a nice sake (wine). I am happy to share the deliciousness of Shochu from rice which the Kumamoto prefecture is the main producing area in Japan. I also like tennis, skiing, and golf. It is difficult to practice the outdoor sports when living in a city as big as Tokyo but here I will be able to do it more often.

Finally, I understand the COVID situation making the life and business difficult these days, but I will do my best to overcome the situation by working together. Please do not hesitate to knock the door of the JETRO Genève office.

Historical performance for Japanese and Swiss athletes in Tokyo

Japanese athletes have beaten their previous record with 58 medals (Gold 27, Silver 14, Bronze 17). This is much better than the 41 in Rio de Janeiro. In number of medals, Japan ranked third after the USA and China.

Japanese athletes have been especially good at Judo (12 medals) and Wrestling (7), but also in collective sports with the gold medal for Baseball (men) and Softball (women). It was the most successful Summer Olympics in Japan's history.

Tokyo brought luck to Swiss Athletes too. They brought home 13 medals (Gold 3, Silver 4, Bronze 6). Almost twice as many as their goal (7 like in Rio).

Swiss athletes have been especially

successful at cycling with 6 medals. While, the absence of Roger Federer was regretted, Belinda Bencic perfectly represented the country with the gold medal in the singles and silver in the doubles partnering with Viktorija Golubic.

Paralympics ongoing



Screenshot from the video of the closure ceremony: "Thank you"

The Olympics are over, but the Paralympics are ongoing until September 4th. Both Japan and Switzerland have a solid delegation able to continue on Tokyo's positive vibe.

All results and related news can be found on the [official website](#).

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EVENT

Japanese economy grew in the second quarter despite state of emergency

Japanese economy did well during 2021's second quarter (April-June) with a 0.3% growth of the GDP. At an annualized rate, this represent a 1.3% growth. This positive result follows a first 2021 negative quarter (-0.9%).

Private demand has been the driving force this quarter with 0.9% growth despite the state of emergency that covered part of the quarter.

This has been a good surprise; leading to better figures than forecasted.

Regarding foreign trade, exports have continually and robustly grown during the past year recovering from 2020's Q2. Japan's worst quarter in recent time.

The third quarter will be tense. On one hand Japan is facing its strongest outburst of COVID infections, but, on the other hand, millions of people are now being vaccinated every week.

Unfortunately, the positive stimulus that is usually associated with an event as large as the Olympics

and Paralympic Games was minor this time as the event took place behind closed doors.

The fourth quarter is expected to be better. The positive effects of the vaccinations should be much stronger as most of the population will have been vaccinated by then. The country is rapidly catching up with 43% of fully vaccinated people.

Source: [Cabinet Office of Japan](#)

動向

TREND

革新

INNOVATION

Two leaders co-working on large-scale offshore wind projects in Japan

Kansai Electric Power (Kansai EPCO) and RWE Renewables (RWE) have signed an agreement to jointly study the feasibility of a large-scale floating offshore wind project off the Japanese coast. The two companies are to further strengthen their existing relationship and leverage the complementary strengths of both companies, in support of Japan's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. RWE is a German company. Leader in offshore wind, RWE is one of the world's largest renewable energy companies. Kansai EPCO is leading in zero-carbon energy and proactively studies ways to maximise the introduction of renewable energy sources into mainstream power sources. The company is promoting the

development of offshore wind projects in various Japanese regions including Akita, Yamagata and Nagasaki Prefectures. Kansai EPCO has also been involved in two offshore wind projects in Europe.

With a coastline around 30,000 km long and one of the largest Exclusive Economic Zone Areas, Japan has strong potential in regard to offshore wind farms.

Source: [Kansai Electric Power](https://www.kansai-electric-power.com/en/press-releases/2021/05/20210511_01)



Mr. Shinichi Kato from RWE Renewables Japan G.K. (left) and Mr. Nozomu Mori from Kansai EPCO (right)

Agenda

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AGENDA

✓ Stay tuned!

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online: <http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

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