



**A message from Danielle Vermaelen
BJA EU Committee Chair & Partner at EY**

Dear BJA friends,

We were last together on March 3 for our BJA luncheon with His Excellency Kazuo Kodama, Ambassador of Japan to the European Union, and with Mr Marco Chirullo, who has been the Deputy Chief Negotiator of the EPA on the European side and now serves as Deputy Head of the Far East unit at DG Trade.

We were fortunate that this event still could take place; no mouthmasks, only handgel and a declaration on honour of being Corona Free. We all enjoyed the event and went home with the positive message that the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement is a balanced, comprehensive agreement signed between 2 likeminded partners who believe free trade supports economic growth, and which aims at a positive overall outcome for both Japan and the EU; that this agreement - as the world's largest bilateral free trade deal, between partners covering nearly one third of global GDP - shows to the world that cooperation, not protectionism, is the way to tackle the current global challenges. The EU-Japan EPA is a game changer, that will serve as an example for new generation trade agreements.

Since then the world has changed. But we have shown resilience, flexibility and

motivation to beat the crisis. The European Union as well has been acting to help its citizens and companies to cope with the new reality. Although one might think that the Union's reaction has been slow and uncoordinated across the different countries, we must admit that the challenges are unprecedented.

Protecting the health and safety of its citizens has been the EU's top priority. In addition, the EU and its member states are taking resolute action to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the outbreak and sustain jobs. The EU is mobilising all resources available to help member states coordinate their national responses, and this includes providing objective information about the spread of the virus and effective efforts to contain it.

EU leaders have agreed on a number of priorities to coordinate the EU's response to COVID-19 on both health and socio-economic areas: limiting the spread of the virus, ensuring the provision of medical equipment, boosting research for treatments and vaccines, and supporting jobs, businesses and the economy.

With respect to the latter, the EU is preparing a recovery plan, based on a revamped proposal for the next long-term EU budget (Multiannual Financial Framework). This includes enabling the transition towards a greener and digital society, and drawing all lessons from the current crisis for the EU's preparedness and resilience. In their 'Roadmap for Recovery'*, European Council President Charles Michel, jointly with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, called for the new MFF to be agreed as soon as possible to avoid delays in essential investment and ensure resources can be directed to where they are needed as quickly as possible. We can only share their concern and support their action.

Japan has adopted his own model, less intrusive, allowing for a certain level of economic activity and maintaining people's freedom to move about; as such the model is more sustainable over the long term. It makes it a viable strategy to fight the long-term battle.** The Japanese government also organised an emergency package to fight the crisis and minimize its impact on the economy.

Let's be confident and have trust that all these actions taken in Europe and in Japan, but also elsewhere in the world, will allow for a back to a 'new' normal in which fair and balanced trade can serve people's health and welfare globally!

We hope that the EU news updates in the weekly BJA Newsflash are of interest to you. Furthermore the EU Committee is working on several initiatives for activities, business luncheons, etc. for the last quarter of the year. Do not hesitate to reach out to us in case you have a specific request for the EU Committee; we will be glad to help you.

The EU Committee and the BJA wish you to stay safe and healthy!

Danielle Vermaelen

BJA EU Committee Chair & Partner at EY

* <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43384/roadmap-for-recovery-final-21-04-2020.pdf>

** From 'The Diplomat', 24 April 2020, by Kazuto Suzuki, 'COVID-19 Strategy: The Japan Model Has Japan found a viable long-term strategy for the pandemic?'