



Opening of a new Honorary Consulate of Switzerland in Higashikawa, Hokkaido

Press releases, 09.05.2024

The Ambassador of Switzerland to Japan, Dr. Andreas Baum, is pleased to announce that Ms. Tomoka TAKEUCHI has been appointed as Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Higashikawa, Hokkaido.

The post will provide support for Swiss citizens, strengthen Switzerland's presence in this important prefecture, and foster exchanges in the field of tourism, sport, agriculture, science and sustainability. Ms. Tomoka TAKEUCHI has been appointed as Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Higashikawa, Hokkaido. She has taken her functions on January 22, 2024. An official opening ceremony is being held on May 10, 2024.

Known for its natural scenery, generous snowfalls and production of rice, cereals, beans, sugar beets, vegetables and dairy products, the vast prefecture of Hokkaido is home to some 5.22 million people and represents more than a fifth of Japan's territory. Hokkaido features numerous ski resorts that are ever more popular among winter sports enthusiasts, including Swiss visitors. Exchanges in this sector are long-standing. The sister city agreement between St. Moritz and Kutchan, for instance, dates back to 1964. There is potential for Switzerland and Hokkaido to further strengthen their partnership in the fields of hospitality, sports, sustainability and agriculture. Advanced manufacturing and academic research are also increasingly in focus. The Honorary Consulate will contribute to accelerating these developments.

Other tasks of the Honorary Consulate include support for Swiss citizens in need, support in cases of consular protection and social assistance, life certificates for Old Age Pensions, support for the Embassy in crisis situations, support for the preparation of official visits, and the development of a local network.

Olympic Medalist Tomoka Takeuchi is a leading figure in snowboard competition with strong ties to Switzerland. A Silver Medalist at the Sochi Games of 2014 and a Bronze Medalist at the 2015 World Championships, Ms. Takeuchi's appearance at the 2022 Beijing Olympics marked her sixth participation in the Games, a record in the history of women's Winter Olympics. Since 2007, Tomoka Takeuchi has been training with the Swiss Alpine Snowboard Team, spending several months per year in Switzerland and becoming fluent in German. For the next phase of her career, Tomoka Takeuchi wants to leverage her passion for sport, education and tourism, including in the context of the Swiss-Japanese friendship. She is also an ambassador for Vitality.Swiss, the public diplomacy program of the Embassy of Switzerland in Japan, which celebrates 160 years of bilateral relations in 2024.

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