

sustainable japan

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Envoy emphasizes acting on climate change, partnerships with Japan

Destiny and a little luck: EU Ambassador Paquet

Name: Jean-Eric Paquet

Title: Ambassador of the European Union
URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan_en?s=169
Hometown: Strasbourg, France
Years in Japan: less than one

Leaders & Readers

KERRY FURUKAWA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Luck has played a big role in the career of Jean-Eric Paquet, the European Union's ambassador to Japan. He was well prepared for the yearlong competition that resulted in him being selected to join the European Commission in 1996. However, Paquet said he was very lucky to have been one of only 80 chosen out of 25,000 applicants.

"Lucky also because I then had indeed the opportunity for 30 years to work across many policy areas and in many different places as well. So my career spans across EU policies and diplomacy," Paquet said.

But even to those not au fait with the workings of the union of 27 countries, which have a combined population of 400 million, it is clear that it takes more than luck to sustain a career in international administration. It could be, as Paquet explained, that his path was set out in his lineage—that his background so reflects the EU's founding ideals, there was no other way.

The EU's foundations were laid in 1957 with the primary goals of maintaining peace and promoting economic growth in member countries. Paquet said the EU is a "peace proj-

ect," a mechanism for divergent nations to identify commonalities and work together.

"We are a continent which had World War I and World War II at its core—and before those, many others. So it's a continent which has been ravaged by war and hardship, and atrocities, and power plays between nations. And I have a German mother and a French father. These are the two nations which were at loggerheads during these two world wars, unfortunately. I have a French grandfather who was also a Righteous Among the Nations," a title bestowed by Israel's Holocaust remembrance organization Yad Vashem on non-Jews who saved Jews during the war. "So that's on my French side, and on my German mother's side, I have a grandfather who died as a German soldier. So that's the other side. And that's my family. So, for me, this peace project is what I am—culturally, personally."

Paquet's public service intentions then, were always strong, it was just a question of where he would seek to fulfill them. But luck and destiny are outside of one's control. And certainly, one has to actively participate in one's career to be named European Commission ambassador to Mauritania, deputy secretary-general in charge of policy coordination and director-general for research and innovation—a role equivalent to vice-minister.

Passion, commitment and fervent engagement with the pressing issues could be some of the attributes that have contributed to Paquet's longevity and success. Take climate change, for example. Not only does he quite ardently call this "the key challenge for humanity," he can rattle off policy objectives, effective dates and relevant players'

names and positions, and identify gaps that future policy will need to address. At the same time, he acknowledges the difficulty that ordinary people can have in acting to stem climate change.

"In Europe, our green and climate and energy policies started in earnest in the mid-'90s and accelerated after the Paris Agreement eight years ago, but we did the groundwork between 2000 and 2010, when we put in place the EU Emissions Trading System, which is carbon pricing. We had the first objectives in terms of renewable energies, energy efficiency and CO2 reductions already in legislation at a much lower level. But we had them already. So the architecture was in place and we could, from that, ramp up. We did a lot of electricity market reforms, we did grid connections. And this was not something easy. I mean, we are today in a really interesting place I think, but the investment in terms of attention, knowledge, but also financial costs and political capital, has been very, very significant."

But Europe and the rest of the world are far from the end. Paquet calls Japan's climate policy ambitious and says the hard outcomes will take time. On climate change, however, time is something that he believes the world doesn't have much of.

"It's a change management process of an extremely deep and in principle urgent nature, so very difficult for any society or policy set-up. But it is also because having been in research and having worked on the science with scientists, I know that time is up. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just did this review, and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world must halve its emissions by 2030. So



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Born in Paris on March 3, 1966, Jean-Eric Paquet graduated from Robert Schuman University in Strasbourg, the official seat of the European Parliament, with a degree in international and public policies in 1988.

The following year, he completed a master's degree in European administration at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. In 1992, he returned to Robert Schuman University and completed another master's in German studies.

He was 27 years old when the European Union was formed. Directly before coming to Japan, he was director-general at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. In that role, his achievements included the setup and pilot of the European Innovation Council and spearheading science and technology agreements and relations with several international partners.

is no doubt that he is deeply invested. In Japan, implementation and administration of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement are core parts of his work. Separate strategic and digital partnership agreements also cover areas such as artificial intelligence and 6G network technology. The EU-Japan Green Alliance is a partnership focused on climate and the environment, and a partnership on connectivity entails joint infrastructure development projects in their countries in Asia and Africa.

"And then there's the political momentum of the alignment and the support which Japan gave to Ukraine and the sanctions, which is absolutely remarkable. And from that there is now this geostrategic or geosecurity space from the Indo-Pacific to Europe which is now really emerging. As an ambassador here, this is the heart of my work. But also in Europe, where the Indo-Pacific was very distant, it now becomes much more relevant for Europeans too," Paquet said.

in 2050, of course you need climate neutrality. But 2050, I find, honestly, is not the point. Because if we don't halve by 2030, then 2050 will not be helping us much except if the miracle technology of sucking CO2 out of the atmosphere suddenly emerges," Paquet said.

Paquet talked with similar verve about topics ranging from the "unrivaled energy

of the African continent" to the importance of not pitching individual action on climate change as a "moral obligation" to the recent Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima being "a spectacular Japanese success." He admitted, too, that he could talk for hours beyond the interview.

It might have been a stroke of luck that got Paquet started on this journey, but there

Destination Restaurants 2023: Award ceremony

Destination Restaurants is a list of Japan's best restaurants published by The Japan Times. Started in 2021, the list is selected by Japanese experts with an international audience in mind. On June 20, The Japan Times hosted the 2023 Destination Restaurants Awards at The Tender House, a cozy restaurant in Tokyo's Minato Ward, in which the selected restaurants were recognized for their exquisite dishes and sustainable cuisine.

Restaurant Hagi, located in Iwaki city, Fukushima Prefecture, won Destination Restaurant of the Year 2023.

Chef and owner of Hagi, Harutomoto Hagi, mentioned that after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, local farmers

and chefs have been working together to ensure that the food and cuisine of Fukushima is not lost, and it is very important for local people to recognize the existence of local chefs by receiving the Destination Restaurants award. I want to bring people to Fukushima with the power of cuisine.

The 120-odd attendees were delighted with curated platters prepared by some of the listed chefs, as well as La Grande Dame champagne provided by MHD.

During the event's talk session, the judges talked about the motivation behind making the Destination Restaurants list. The judges selecting the restaurants list, Yoshiaki Tsuji, Naoyuki Honda and Takefumi Hamada, explained that the

evaluation criteria included not simply using local ingredients, but whether the chefs have the skills to make the best use of the ingredients in a sustainable way, whether they are creating a unique gastronomy, whether the chefs are playing an important role in raising the level of the local producers by having the restaurants at the selected locations, and whether the restaurant adds to the community by shining a light on it.

The three judges said they hoped the Destination Restaurant award would have a positive impact on the local communities and producers by bringing restaurants and chefs in untapped areas to the public's attention.

Hagi
The Destination Restaurant of the Year 2023

Address
171-10, Uchigo Midaisakaimachi, Iwaki, Fukushima
<http://www.hagi-france.com>

Casa del Cibo

Address
1-19-6, Minatotakadai, Hachinohe, Aomori
<http://www.casa-del-cibo.com>

Restaurant Pas Mal

Address
2-3-16, Nanukamachi, Yamagata, Yamagata
<https://yamagatafrench-pasmal.com>

Otowa Restaurant

Address
3554-7, Nishiharacho, Utsunomiya, Tochigi
<https://otowa-artisan.co.jp>

Terroir Aitoibukuro

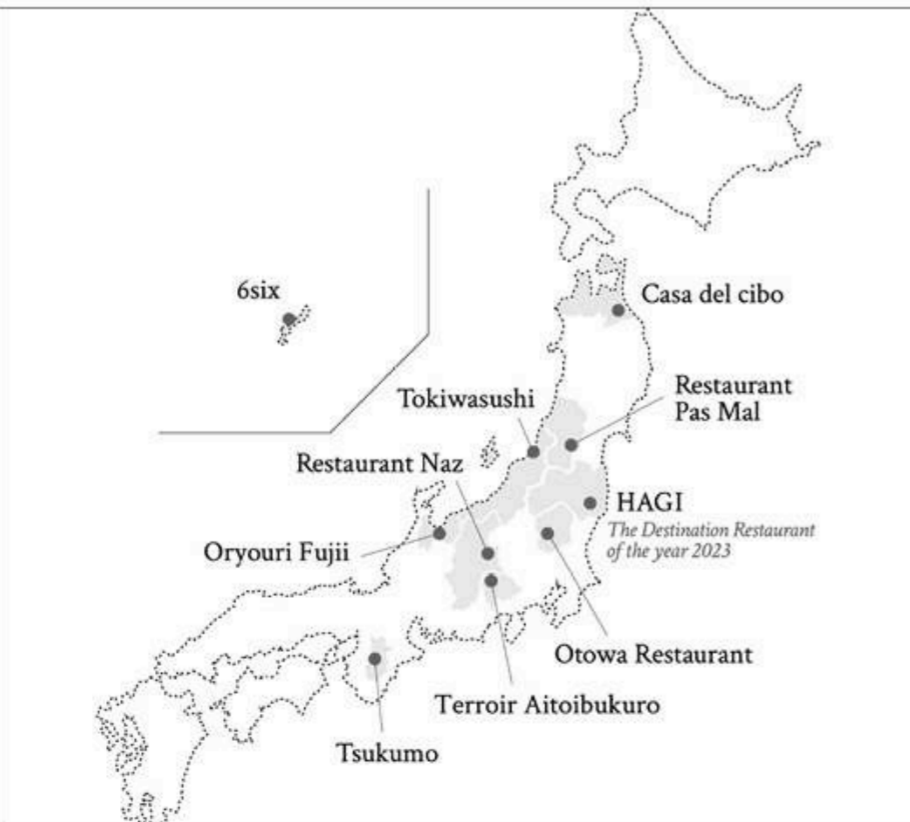
Address
414, Takanecho Nagasawa, Hokuto, Yamanashi
<https://aitoibukuro.com>

Restaurant Naz

Address
GREEN SEED Karuizawa 134-3, Oiwake, Kitasaku-gun, Karuizawa, Nagano
<http://naz-karuizawa.jp>

Tokiwasushi

Address
3-7-8, Chuocho, Shibata, Niigata
<https://tokiwasushi.top>



Oryouri Fujii

Address
93, Iwasebukamachi, Toyama, Toyama
<https://www.oryouri-fujii.jp>

Tsukumo

Address
968, Kideracho, Nara, Nara
<http://tsukumonara.com>

6six

Address
499-1, Kori, Kunigami-gun, Nakijin-son, Okinawa
<https://six-kouri.com>

Scan the QR code for more information about Destination Restaurants 2023



Award-winning chefs of Destination Restaurants 2023 YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



Award-winning chefs and judges YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) director Reiko Nakayama. YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



Bolivia Charge d'Affaires Natalia Fernanda Sakazar Balderrama conducted the toast YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



Takayuki Ogawa, Chief Operating Officer at Tasaki, one of the event's main sponsors gave a few words YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



Destination Restaurants judges (from left) Takefumi Hamada, Naoyuki Honda and Yoshiaki Tsuji led the panel session YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



From left: Yoshiaki Tsuji, Mitsuaki Suematsu, Naoyuki Honda, Takefumi Hamada. YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



Chefs and attendees YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI



Chefs and attendees YOSHIAKI TSUTSUI