

# sustainable japan

ESG promotional content  
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## Founding spirit drives Suntory's environmental efforts

### ESG Talk

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Under its corporate mission, "To Create Harmony with People and Nature," the Suntory Group has worked to address issues facing our society, including climate change and environmental problems. In 2019, the group established the "Suntory Group Sustainability Vision," which showcased, to the Japanese as well as the global community, the group's efforts to help conserve water resources, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, conserve the global environment and protect human rights in supply chains, as well as contribute to spiritually rich and healthy lives of people. It calls on countries, companies, nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and consumers to work together toward the goal of solving issues faced by society on a global scale.

Takeshi Niinami's interest in considering environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors in business management grew after experiencing the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster that hit eastern Japan while he was serving as president of Lawson Inc. Facing the disaster's devastation, he said he strongly felt that "Businesses must stay close

to its society and live with it to make it better." Suntory does business under the spirit of "Giving Back to Society," passed down since the company's founding, and engages in ESG initiatives. It too believes, Niinami said, that "we can operate business only as long as we stay close to our society."

### Recognized for water efforts

In an initiative for increasing water resources, the company in 2003 launched the "Natural Water Sanctuary" project aimed at enhancing the replenishment of water in the ground. It was active in Tokyo and 14 other prefectures across Japan as of June 2020. It had a target of cultivating water that totaled at least twice as much as the groundwater used by the company's domestic plants. The target was achieved in 2019, a year ahead of the deadline. For Suntory, which publicly pledges "Mizu to Ikiru" ("Living with Water") as the group's promise to stakeholders, water is key to its corporate activity. Niinami said, "In order for us to make beverages, we need to not just take water from nature but also protect and nurture water resources and pass them on to the next generation." Suntory also undertakes this activity at its overseas operations and aims to expand it further.

In addition to efforts to enhance the cultivation of water in the ground, Suntory's water-related efforts, which are known internationally, include measures to save and recycle water at its plants, nature and water education programs for children, and efforts to conserve and regenerate the natural environment. In December 2020, Suntory Beverage & Food Ltd. earned the highest rating of "A" in a water security survey by CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project) for the fifth consecutive year. The subsidiary earned the same rating in CDP's climate change program, which recognizes excellence in environmental conservation activities.

In measures to address climate change, Suntory announced an "Environmental



Chief Executive Officer of Suntory Holdings, Ltd. Tak Niinami and Minako Suematsu getting ready for the ESG talk. HIROMICHI MATONO

Vision toward 2050" under which it aims to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions to net zero across its whole value chain. Working with stakeholders, Suntory undertakes initiatives such as the introduction of energy-saving technologies, the active use of renewable energy and the use of next-generation infrastructure.

### Improving plastic recycling

In 2019, it established the "Suntory Group Plastic Policy," which aims to switch all PET bottles used by Suntory's global operations to recycled or plant-based materials by the end of 2030, making all of them sustainable. According to Niinami, Japan leads the world in the system for collecting used plastic and the technology for recycling most of it, thanks to the private sector's role in leading the efforts to develop such a system and technology. He says that what needs to be done next is to develop a system to recycle the waste plastics that have so far been used

as a heat source.

But there are issues confronting such an endeavor. One is the huge costs of developing and introducing the necessary technologies, which are expected to progress going forward. In order to recover the costs, instead of just passing them on to consumers, Niinami says, beverage companies need to not just cooperate with rivals but must unite all available resources in the industry, including its supply chains, to achieve technological innovation and reduce costs as well as increase processing capacity. He adds that cooperation by citizens and the support by the government are also necessary. There are in addition urgent needs to reduce the use of virgin plastic and to develop technologies to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide discharged in the recycling process.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the economy and our lives, but it also has created an opportunity for people

to realize the usefulness of plastics in preventing infection and for medical treatment. "People used to think plastics must be eliminated because they are 'evil,' but such thinking has undergone a significant change," Niinami said. "They now think plastics should be recycled."

### Global COVID-19 efforts

Suntory globally engages in various activities to help people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include the production of sterilizing alcohol in Japan, the United States, Canada, Europe and Mexico; the provision of various forms of support to restaurant and bar workers and their families across numerous markets, including meal support and the donation of hand-made face masks to people in the restaurant industry, mainly in the U.S.; and the "Sakimeshi" project to support restaurants in Japan. The company's employees offered ideas for support projects, varying in scale, and then realized

them by working with local communities. Niinami believes the company's sustainability activity has had a significant role in motivating employees on such initiatives. The sustainability activity "made them feel like working with a company that shares their wish (to contribute to society), which helped motivate them." He added that he can feel "the founding spirit of 'Giving Back to Society' is very much alive across our global operations."

Niinami has a sense of crisis about the fact that moves to create ESG rules and standards are being led by Europe. He worries that the idea of "green technology" could mean that technologies that have existed for many years may be regarded as having no value just because they do not comply with newly created rules. Niinami said the idea of ESG is being used by countries as part of their growth strategy, and he had the following advice to offer Japanese businesses from the standpoint of a global company:

"You need to continue to showcase your company's technology and initiatives, and get everybody involved. In doing so, you should talk about things that you can do by putting in a little more effort, instead of just what you can do right away. You can achieve innovation by setting a target a little further away. That's what common sense says in the world. You should go along the 'virtue done openly' philosophy rather than 'virtue done secretly.' It's important for both the private sector and the government to disseminate information to the world and make what is attractive about Japanese companies and their technologies known."

## SUNTORY

The ESG Talk series are interviews to business leaders who are active proponents of ESG investing and practices in Japan.



After working for Mitsubishi Corp., Niinami served as president and chief executive officer of Lawson Inc. and took up his current position in 2014. HIROMICHI MATONO

## Monthly Times Gallery



French Ambassador Philippe Setton poses with Rep. Nobuteru Ishihara, chairman of the Japan-France Parliamentary Friendship League in the House of Representatives, in front of his family's hina-dan, a collection of traditional Japanese dolls for the occasion of the Hina Matsuri (Doll Festival). EMBASSY OF FRANCE



Djibouti Ambassador Ahmed Arait Ali met former Ambassador Koji Yonetani, current director-general of the African Affairs Department and assistant minister at the Foreign Ministry, at the ministry in Tokyo on Feb. 4. EMBASSY OF DJIBOUTI



Lebanese Ambassador Nidal Yehya and his wife, Nancy Nameh, with children and teachers from the Chateau School, a multilingual international preschool, in the ambassador's office, Feb. 19. EMBASSY OF LEBANON



The Embassy of Mexico has started an initiative to celebrate International Women's Day jointly with other embassies in Japan. The theme was #Diplomats4Women, with members of different missions holding #Diplomats4Women posters. EMBASSY OF MEXICO



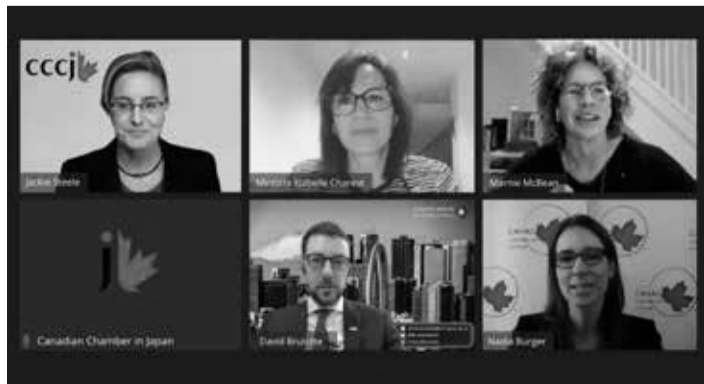
On the occasion of the Statehood Day of the Republic of Serbia on Feb. 15, on behalf of President Aleksandar Vucic, Charge d'Affaires ad interim Ivana Golubovic-Duboka presented the Order of the Serbian Flag-Third Rank to Naohide Ueyama, honorary consul-general of the Republic of Serbia in Osaka. EMBASSY OF SERBIA



On March 5, newly appointed Armenian Ambassador Areg Hovhannisyan presented a copy of his credentials to Takeo Akiba, vice minister for foreign affairs. EMBASSY OF ARMENIA



The Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan organized Mimosa Day to promote International Women's Day (Festa della Donna) on March 8. ITALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN



The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Japan held a webinar on March 8 and 9 to support International Women's Day. The speakers were Team Canada's chef de mission for Tokyo 2020, Marnie McBean and Quebec's minister for education and for the status of women Isabelle Charest, with Jackie F. Steele as the moderator. LAURENT TREMPPE

## NTT Art Technology shows regional art anywhere, anytime

### Satoyama ~ Authentic Japan

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Culture can be a powerful tool to invigorate a region because everything else — the economy, society, education, people's lives — is connected to culture. "All the measures that have been taken from various aspects to revitalize a region derive from one common principle, which is how to utilize the region's culture," said Manabu Kunieda, CEO of NTT ArtTechnology Corp., in a recent online interview with The Japan Times.

Taking advantage of technologies effectively is a must in utilizing culture for regional revitalization and promotion. This is especially so in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic and the new era that will follow. NTT ArtTechnology uses cutting-edge digitalization and visualization technologies to showcase various forms of culture and the arts, connect regions with regions, and serve as a hub for cultural exchanges.

It is a new company, established in December. The parent company, NTT East Corp., identified issues that each region faces while conducting its core business of providing communications and related services to all of eastern Japan. "NTT East has also been contributing in solving regional problems, for example, providing ICT network solutions to the primary industries" of agriculture, dairy and fishing, said Kunieda, referring to information and communications technology.

He said the number of issues related to preserving regional culture and art has been increasing in recent years. "Issues range from damage caused by disasters or aging to a shortage of successors. Many regions face difficulties in preserving both tangible and



3D immersive theater NTT ARTTECHNOLOGY



Digital x Hokusai "Hasyo=Development" Hokusai vs Hiroshige exhibition being held at ICC. NTT ARTTECHNOLOGY

intangible cultural assets and art forms, and handing them down to future generations," he said.

### Advanced tech to show old art

NTT ArtTechnology aims to overcome this challenge by digitalizing and archiving cultural content and artworks using advanced technologies including high-resolution scanning and reproduction.

But its work does not end there. Regions and their cultures and arts will have a better chance of survival if many people take an interest in and interact with them, stimulating communication among people as well as regions. To achieve this, NTT ArtTechnology offers means for showcasing digitalized contents, both on-site and online.

Its head museum is NTT Inter Communication Center (ICC) in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward, where "Digital x Hokusai," a series of exhibitions displaying digitalized replicas of great works of art, including Katsushika Hokusai's series "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji," has been held. The real Hokusai works are housed at Yamanashi Prefectural Museum. Being able to appreciate the real works is of course worthwhile, but digital replicas can offer a totally different experience. Kunieda explained that it is often the case that lighting has to be adjusted so as not to damage works in museums and galleries. At the ICC museum, "visitors are amazed to see the exhibits so up-close, with even small details and textures realistically reproduced, in a well-lit space," he said. Techniques like 3D animation and projection mapping add dynamism and interactivity to an exhibition.

The digital exhibition also enhanced visitors' interest in seeing the real works, and many of them actually paid visits to the



Virtual reality projection without the use of HMD or smartglasses. NTT ARTTECHNOLOGY

Yamanashi Prefectural Museum later. Digitalized contents can also be distributed to satellite museums installed in community halls, airport lounges, hospital waiting rooms, nursing homes or office buildings using secure and fast networks that NTT East provides.

### Connecting culture to world

A virtual museum offers the convenience and excitement of being able to enjoy works of art online anytime and anywhere using digital devices. "We can also connect to the world that way," Kunieda said. "We held two virtual museum tours in February for audiences in the United States and Europe. The tours were attended by 200 viewers each."

NTT ArtTechnology plans to work on the digitalization of not only two-dimensional works but also three-dimensional works like installations and buildings, and performing arts as well. "Creating an archive of digital content of intangible cultural assets such as the Nebuta Festival in Aomori Prefecture," featuring huge paper lanterns, "will help future generations learn about its traditions and craftsmanship," Kunieda said.

The technologies of digitalization and distribution help people experience different cultures and arts, and connect with each other online and offline. "We believe that the accumulation of such experiences will lead to the revitalization of regions," Kunieda said.

"Sustainable Japan," features issues related to the environment and a sustainable society. For more information, see <https://sustainable.japantimes.com/satoyama>

