

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations for the Budo Cultural Exchange Program Connecting Japan and New Zealand, and extend my gratitude for the contributions made by the Nippon Budo-kan.

Due to COVID-19, I believe Budo-ka (the martial arts practitioners) have faced many difficulties, such as the cancellation of competitions or face-to-face training. I would like to pay tribute to all the instructors and Budo-ka recognizing their effort during that difficult period.

In 1964, the Tokyo Olympics were the first Olympic Games in Japan and in Asia where Judo was an official event, and the Nippon Budo-kan was built as the venue. Fifty-seven years later, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games were held in 2021, and Karate-do was chosen as an additional event. This time Judo and Karate-do competitions were held at the Nippon Budo-kan. It was a splendid achievement that the competitions were held successfully overcoming the severe restrictions of COVID-19 including games without spectators. I would also like to commend the New Zealand female karate athlete for her performance in the competition. The All Japan Aikido Embukai has also resumed after COVID. I would like to express my sincere respect for the efforts of all those involved.

In 2022, Japan and New Zealand celebrated 70 years of diplomatic relations and we now enjoy a “Strategic Cooperative Partnership”. The foundation of this strong bond is people-to-people exchanges including those through martial arts.

In New Zealand, especially in Auckland where 30% of the population is concentrated, there are many people who practice Japanese martial arts on a daily basis. This is the result of the efforts of New Zealanders who have travelled all the way to Japan to train, and Japanese martial art masters who have settled in New Zealand since the 1960s.

I believe that it is this mutual attraction to each other’s culture, respect rooted in human dignity, and mutual efforts to work hard together based on common rules and manners that has fostered the partnership between the two countries today.

The late Mr. MIFUJI Yoshio, the 10th Secretary General of the Nippon Budo-kan, once said: “In Budo, there are many paths; there is no one ‘right’ path, but each one of us follows a path to find their own goal.” I hope that Budo-ka from both countries will deepen their friendship with respect as they follow their own paths and that will lead to further development of goodwill between the two countries.

Consul General of Japan in Auckland
MATSUI Shinji