

Dear Aikidoists from Europe and overseas,

This year we are celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the European Union. On that special occasion we have the privilege to host the great-grandson of the Founder of Aikido, Mr. Mitsuteru Ueshiba who will be teaching this international seminar and subsequently visiting Belgium, Luxembourg and France.

Three years ago the European Commission invited the International Aikido Federation to become its strategic partner for the European Week of Sport which will be organised the 5<sup>th</sup> time this autumn. It is very promising to see that Aikido organisation across Europe mobilised their members to get more and more involved in this program promoting physical activity for a healthier society in Europe.

I was particularly pleased to visit one of the transnational meetings of a small collaborative partnership, funded from the Erasmus+ instrument. This partnership is about using Aikido as a tool to reduce aggression in schools. It is a brave initiative to demonstrate how Aikido can contribute to mitigate pressing problems of our society.

Building a strong bridge between physical activities and education is one of our most important priorities. Aikido, being a spiritual martial art, has an enormous potential to support this objective. I therefore welcome the intention to create a European Aikido Instructor Licence. This will help abolishing the barriers between EU Member States in terms of professional qualifications and support the basic principle of the free movement of workers.

Building on these positive results, I was very happy to learn that several national Aikido federations from the EU decided to revive and reform the European Aikido Federation. It will continue and further expand our partnership as a regional organ of the International Aikido Federation and under the guidance of the Ueshiba Family.

Finally, let us remember that both the European Communities and Aikido were born in the aftermath of WWII when Europe and Japan were suffering unprecedented damages. The peoples of Europe and of Japan shared a deep desire for peace. The EU is the most successful peace project of our times. Aikido is a way of finding peace within and among individuals.

I wish

- All the best to Mr. Mitsuteru Ueshiba for his European Tour celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EU-Japan relations;
- all the success to the newly elected members of the Board of the European Aikido Federation to strengthen the collaboration with the European Institutions. We can do more and better together;

and last but not least, I wish a joyful seminar to all the participants.