

---

## Elections: PM's party wins majority vote amidst low turnout. The fight against Covid-19 high on the government's list of priorities

(Tokyo) – Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party and the Komeito coalition party retain a majority in the Lower House of the Japanese parliament, winning a total of 293 seats out of 456 up for grabs in the Sunday 31 October elections. While these are 12 fewer than in the 2017 election, they are more than enough seats to guarantee government stability for the next four years and ensure control of the Lower House's 17 standing committees. The Japanese Prime Minister, elected on 4 October after winning the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential race, had decided, just 10 days before taking office, to dissolve the Lower House in advance, stating that he hoped to obtain a clear mandate from voters so as to confer on his new government the required legitimacy based on public consensus. The two coalition parties, however, were aware of the challenges characterising a complicated election campaign that also had to reckon with widespread dissatisfaction over the ten-year term of the previous liberal-democratic governments, and thus decided to scale down their expectations, recommending aiming for the minimum target of 233 seats needed to secure a majority. *Yet the outcome of the polls, which arrived at 5:00 a.m. on November 1 (10:00 p.m. of October 31 in Italy) exceeded expectations, giving the LDP an absolute majority with 261 seats, representing a slight drop compared to 276 seats won in the 2017 elections, whilst awarding the government's partner party Komeito 32 seats, 3 more than in the previous election.* In a press conference held on the morning of November 1st, Prime Minister Kishida, president of the Liberal-Democratic Party, thanked citizens for the trust granted to him and assured that he would continue to engage in dialogue with the opposition. He pledged to honour the commitments made during the election campaign and, announcing his intention to step up the implementation process, outlined the first steps involved. *The fight against Covid19 is high on the list of priorities:* "We will provide an overview of the response to the new coronavirus by the first half of the month. - he explained - and by the end of the month we will implement a system for ensuring in-patient care for those who need it." In addition, he announced the creation of a fast-response system in which doctors or other medical professionals will contact all [COVID-19] patients staying at home or at accommodation facilities on the day they test positive or by the following day at the latest. He added that the booster shot will be available for those who wish to receive it in December and that free testing options will be greatly extended. He said: "We also plan to launch anti-COVID oral drugs for commercial use by the end of the year, a trump card for early treatment of the infection, and to secure the necessary amounts of approved drugs." Finally, Japan's PM reiterated his intention to further consolidate infectious disease emergency management via improved coordination of operational processes. *With regard to the economy, the Prime Minister announced plans for a major economic stimulus package by mid-November along with the adoption of a supplementary budget as early as possible in the course of the year.* Economic measures will include, inter alia, support for citizens facing serious financial hardship, such as informal workers and families with children. Furthermore, benefits for employers irrespective of field of activity will be maintained until March next year, and special wage subsidies will be extended for the same period. Measures to increase incomes for nursing and childcare workers are also being examined through the establishment of a dedicated committee by mid-November. *In the area of foreign policy, strengthening and developing Japan's relations with the leaders of friendly countries is the objective set out by the Prime Minister:* "I intend to visit allies and partner nations, as soon as possible. I will also welcome them to our country", he told journalists. "On the morning of November 2 I will be leaving for the United Kingdom to attend the COP26 summit, the international Climate Change Conference. Not only will we be endorsing the pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, we will also show our leadership capacity to achieve the zero emissions target across Asia." *With regard to the national security strategy, the Security Council will examine documents drawn up by the government for timely responses to new*

---

*challenges such as missile defense capability, use of advanced technologies, and response to cyber threats.* Making special reference to the so-called "capability to strike enemy bases," Fumio Kishida said, "North Korea test-fired its ballistic missile the first day of the election campaign, and the technology of that missile is evolving rapidly. It's important for Japan to carefully review its strategy, including its national security strategy, and steadily assess whether it can realistically protect the lives of its citizens." In terms of increasing defence spending, he said, "We will look at what is necessary to protect the lives of the people, not just from a budgetary perspective, but based on the reality of what is necessary. As a governing party, it's important for us to engage in a thorough debate on this issue." *Voters are waiting for the majority that won the elections to prove their worth, and the ruling class must face the challenge of not disappointing them, hopefully recovering the decline in confidence in politics and institutions reflected in the declining turnout at the polls.* In fact, only 55.93% of those eligible to vote went to the polls, marking the third lowest turnout rate in the post-war period, although it is more than two percentage points higher than in previous elections. *The Government, which emerged stronger from the election result, will as always find the Japanese Catholic Community at its side in all measures aimed at "protecting all life", especially that of the weakest members of society, while it will listen to its call when life-threatening initiatives are pursued.* In this regard, the words of the president of the Japanese Bishops' Conference, Monsignor **Joseph Mitsuaki Takami**, come to mind, and may also serve as a warning and a motivating inspiration for the incumbent government. "The Creator," said Msgr. Takami in a message a few months ago, "has given the human person a special vocation to care for and protect the common home. *Faith, reason and wisdom are needed to sustain a fair relationship between the environment, society, economy and politics*". These three gifts, he explained, "allow us to discern the best way to protect living conditions and to create new economic, technological and political structures for our common home." Nuclear disarmament for peace-building, fair distribution of vaccines to combat pandemics including in the poorest countries, environmental protection and pro-life themes are issues that the Japanese Catholic Community will be monitoring carefully.

Massimo Succi