

Romania national day

Romania and Japan mark 50 years of friendship

Aurelian Neagu
AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA

In my capacity as ambassador of Romania to Japan, it is with great joy that I greet the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the National Day of my country, celebrated this year in the broader anniversary context of the 2009 jubilee, commemorating 50 years since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Romania and Japan. This felicitous occasion provides me with the pleasant opportunity to present to the Japanese public the outline of the present relationship between Romania and Japan, which foretells promising perspectives for future bilateral cooperation enhancement.



Every Dec. 1, we celebrate a prominent moment in the history of our country — the Great Union, achieved in 1918, when all the territories inhabited by Romanians joined together in a sovereign, unitary state.

This year, the anniversary of the National Day of Romania has a particularly special significance as it is part of a series of festive events held in celebration of 50 years since Romania and Japan restored their diplomatic ties after World War II. These auspices provided renewed opportunities for extended bilateral dialogue and direct exchange of experience between Romania and Japan on political, economic and cultural levels, to the strengthening of our close friendship and deepening of our mutual understanding.

Furthermore, under the wider perspective of the Japan-Danube 2009 Friendship Year celebrations, including four European countries along the Danube River — Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania — we also explored the possibility of expanding multi-lateral cooperation to the fulfillment of our common global

aspirations.

Since the accession to the European Union in 2007, my country has constantly worked to contribute its rich potential and specific experience to the European project by promoting relevant initiatives on the EU agenda. For instance, as a border state of the European Union, Romania brought to the fore the importance of promoting stability, security and prosperity in the Black Sea region, to the benefit of both member and non-member states of the EU.

To this end, in 2009 our country took the lead in the debate over the strategy of the Black Sea Synergy by organizing a series of seminars on the topic, the most recent of which was the second edition of The Black Sea NGOs Forum, held in Bucharest at the end of October.

Japan has been actively engaged in the Black Sea cooperation projects, one example being the annual Black Sea Area Dialogue. The third edition will take place in January in Tokyo under the title "Prospects of Changing Wider Black Sea Area and the Role of Japan" and will feature specialists from Romania and other countries in the Black Sea area.

Romania and Japan, even though geographically separated by thousands of kilometers, have been closely connected by a wide range of substantial ties, consolidated throughout the decades to the present day under a manifold partnership.

We share the same democratic values and beliefs with regard to the rule of law, sustainable economic development and international prosperity. This provides fertile common ground to strengthening friendship and boosting cooperation between our two countries on an all-encompassing range of activities.

Subsequently, we strongly believe that Romania and Japan must build on their mutually shared values to develop the untapped potential of bilateral collaboration.

Japan's sustained contribu-

tions over the past years to Romania's development have turned out to be of invaluable importance to the political, economic and cultural development of our country.

This December we also commemorate 20 years since the fall of the communist regime in Romania, and 20 years of continuous efforts on the path of freedom and democracy. Now that Romania has regained its rightful place in the great European family of free, democratic and prosperous nations, within the framework of NATO and EU, we remember with gratitude that Japan was one of the first countries to recognize the democratic government of Romania immediately after the 1989 Revolution, fully supporting our country's efforts toward democratization.

On behalf of the government of Romania, I would like to convey my gratitude to the government of Japan for the substantial political dialogue maintained on both bilateral and multilateral levels and for the generous assistance and technical expertise provided in fields such as infrastructure, modern technologies, environmental protection, earthquake prevention and other relevant areas that still require attention to be fully implemented in accordance with EU standards.

The bilateral dialogue between our countries was deeply enhanced this year. In May, Their Imperial Highnesses Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko visited Romania during their tour of the four European countries celebrating the Japan-Danube Friendship Year.

Welcomed by Romanian President Traian Basescu and high-ranking Parliament officials, Their Imperial Highnesses were presented the opportunity to experience Romania's traditional heart and modern spirit, while visiting some of the most famous cultural landmarks and tourist sites of our country: the Palace of Parliament, the Village Museum, the Foreign Language and Literature Univer-

sity in Bucharest, as well as the Peles Royal Castle and the Sinaia Monastery.

The dialogue between our countries, reinforced at the highest level in 2009, opened fresh ground for the extension of bilateral cooperation and offered incentives to build up new partnerships in various areas of common interest. Among these, the economic cooperation between Romania and Japan was further raised to a higher level of development.

Beginning with the professional electric equipment producer Makita Corp., which boasts a €12 million turnover just one year after the inauguration of its largest investment in Europe, other Japanese companies like JTEKT Corp., Calsonic Kansei, Itochu Corp. and YKK expect good profits out of their investments in Romania.

It is our strong hope that the present financial turbulence will turn out to be an additional reason for our countries to consolidate their economic and commercial ties in the long run. With a relatively low cost of labor and steady prospects of economic growth inside the EU market, Romania has significant advantages to attract Japanese investors in such fields as automobile components production, technical equipment and agriculture.

As to the commercial cooperation between our countries, it should be mentioned that the volume of exchanges for the first eight months of 2009 maintained at a fairly sound level (¥30 billion), close to the record peak reached two years ago. Concentrating human and technical resources on projects aimed at widening Romania's presence on the Japanese market, we have participated with national pavilions in a series of international fairs and commercial events such as the annual JATA Travel Fair.

Among the economic goals Romania has constantly pursued is the aim of becoming OECD member. We will continue to work for the achieve-

ment of this major foreign policy objective and spare no effort in obtaining the valuable support of OECD member countries, including Japan.

The close relationship between our countries is also visible at the level of cultural cooperation, thanks to the efforts of an increasing number of Japan-Romania friendship associations whose activities cover various domains of interest, including music, visual arts, handicrafts, architecture and sculpture.

With the aim of promoting the complex identity of our country, comprising national specific and European cultural dimensions, it is our guiding policy to present to the Japanese public traditional and contemporary Romanian values, as well as our famous UNESCO heritage sites. To this end, we strive to underline the distinctive Romanian cultural profile on the highly competitive Japanese stage by actively developing cultural projects and engaging in joint European events like the annual program Europe Comes to Your School, consisting of European Union and country presentations made by EU diplomats in schools around Japan on the occasion of May 9, Europe Day.

In celebration of 50 years since the resumption of bilateral diplomatic relations, in 2009 we presented to the Japanese public a traditional folk costume exhibition, opened in June in the presence of Her Imperial Highness Princess Kiko, classical music concerts

by the Romanian National Philharmonic Orchestra in May, ballet representations featuring the worldwide acclaimed Romanian dancer Alina Cojocaru, lace and oil-canvas painting displays.

Grassroots exchanges between two countries and peoples developed at an exponential pace this year. To give one example, in October we welcomed the conclusion of an agreement for the development of sister-city relations between the Romanian city of Sibiu and the Japanese city of Takayama, popularly known as Hida-Takayama. The document was signed by the mayors of the two municipalities as an official acknowledgment of the fruitful direct exchanges and voluntary activities, which have steadily increased in the recent years, to the benefit of the people in the two cities.

The high level of academic collaboration between Romania and Japan reached a fruitful culmination this year when two of the most prestigious universities in our countries, the University of Bucharest and Meiji University, concluded a friendship agreement. Students and scholars exchange programs are currently in progress, with sound prospects of further development.

One of the most notable accomplishments achieved this year on the bilateral level was the Japanese government's decision to eliminate, beginning Sept. 1, the visa requirements for Romanian citizens visiting Japan. In complete coordination with the Japa-



Danube Delta: The largest paradise of birds in Europe

nese authorities on this matter, we inaugurated the first home affairs attache office at the Embassy of Romania in Tokyo. We are confident that as a result of this new provision, the free exchange between our peoples will steadily expand in the future. The number of tourists visiting each other's countries has increased substantially in recent years, with more and

more Romanians traveling to Japan and experiencing its ancient culture, and with many Japanese people, from various circles, discovering Romania's great potential, the opportunities it offers and its marvelous nature.

I invite you to continue to visit Romania and see for yourselves the notable changes that have transformed my country to the better in the recent years.

*Congratulations
to the People of Romania
on the Occasion of
the National Day
of Romania*



JTEKT JTEKT CORPORATION

Nagoya Head Office
No. 7-1, Meieki 4-chome, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya, Aichi Pref., 450-8515, JAPAN

Osaka Head Office
No. 5-8, Minamimemba 3-chome, Chuo-ku, Osaka 542-8502, JAPAN
<http://www.jtekt.co.jp>

**Congratulations
on the National Day of Romania**



HOTEL IBIS ROPPONGI

<http://www.ibis-hotel.com>
phone:03-3403-4411 fax:03-3479-0609
14-4, Roppongi 7-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan