

Slovakia constitution day

Friendship with Japan based on solidarity, common values

Drahomír Štos
AMBASSADOR OF SLOVAKIA

At the outset, I would once again like to express deep condolences and firm solidarity with regard to the Great East Japan Earthquake. It is admirable and moving how the Japanese people were able to cope with this tragic and devastating event. Their resilience, courage and dignity, so well-rooted in Japanese society, will be remembered in our hearts and minds forever. Without a doubt, as it is my strong wish, the government and people of Japan will recover and rebuild their communities and affected areas. Needless to say, Slovakia and its people are ready to help in this ongoing and long-term reconstruction process.

On Sept. 1, Slovakia commemorates its Constitution Day as a manifestation of the strong willingness of the Slovak people to bind their statehood with democratic principles and the rule of law. On that day in 1992, the constitution designed for the emerging sovereign country was adopted by the Slovak National Council. This step paved the way for Slovakia to be acknowledged as an independent member of the international community on Jan. 1, 1993. In the span of just 20 years that followed, Slovakia has managed to build a democratic society, functioning state and market-based economy. The Japanese government and people, among other friendly countries, made it all easier by providing development assistance and support, as well as through numerous friendly and heartfelt people-to-people ties. I feel greatly honored to extend upon today's occasion, and on behalf of Presi-

dent Ivan Gašparovic, the government and people of Slovakia, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the government and friendly people of Japan.

Bilateral relations between Slovakia and Japan are firmly rooted in common values, and based on mutual friendship and respect. Our two countries support development strategies in which aspects of sustainability and social responsibility remain essential. Various exchanges in the past year proved our commitment to results-oriented political dialogue. Cooperation in science and technology, social security arrangements and easier exchanges of young people will be, together with traditional investment and trade cooperation, highlighted as our areas of focus in the years to come. In parallel with bilateral relations, Slovakia supports the deepening partnership between the European Union and Japan in all fields. It is our belief that our business communities will be able, sooner rather than later, to enjoy benefits of a fair and ambitious economic partnership agreement between the EU and Japan. Together, we facilitate greater understanding and closer partnership between Europe and Asia through the inter-regional process of cooperation, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Slovakia also supports Japan's bid to become a permanent member of a reformed United Nations Security Council.

At €43 million, Japan was Slovakia's second-largest export market in Asia. The favorable and transparent investment environment attracted up to 20 Japanese companies to place their production units in Slovakia. Today, brand names such as Panasonic are manu-

facturing here for European markets. Yazaki Corp., as a major supplier for the automotive industry, and Fuso Industries, as a supplier for the air conditioning technologies producers, are maintaining their operations despite the hard times the sectors are experiencing. In general, all Japanese investors are regarded highly for their constructive cooperation with local and central authorities, as well as being socially responsible partners. The overall high satisfaction with manufacturing operations allows us to make advances in research and development cooperation. This move is supported by the Slovak government and widely seen as a road to the prospective future of the Slovakia-Japan economic relationship. Cooperation between the Slovak software company ESET and Canon IT Solutions in the Japanese market is a remarkable step in this direction.

Slovakia is becoming more and more well-known to Japanese travelers. The combination of a rich cultural heritage, which brings together elements of indigenous Slovak and various European traditions, living folk culture, vibrant city life, famous spa resorts and the beauty of its nature underlined by traditional Slovak hospitality make Slovakia a sought-after holiday destination.

Rich cultural interaction provides for strong bonds between art-loving communities and contributes greatly to mutual understanding. Classical music, children's book illustrations, martial arts, Japanese traditional drum music, puppet theater and films continue to be important means of mutually enhancing cultural communication. The outstanding Slovak cellist Ludovit Kanta lives in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, where he, as a long-standing member

of the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa, brings a joy through his passionate playing, not only to a local audience. He and his friend, violinist Henrich Tatar from the Sendai Philharmonic Orchestra, have organized and performed at the special concert "Slovakia for Sendai" in May this year as well as in numerous performances in post-quake shelters. The art exhibitions of Dusan Kallay, a painter and illustrator of European class, and of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava toured Japan in 2010 and 2011.

I would also like to send a special greeting to all Slovak nationals here in Japan and especially from the areas affected by the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident, and to express my acknowledgment for their continued support to the Slovak Embassy and for the role that they play, particularly in the cultural sphere, in further enhancing bilateral relations between Slovakia and Japan. We all have been through difficult times this year, but it is my conviction that our bonds with our Japanese hosts have strengthened further. My sincere appreciation also goes to all the Japanese agencies and companies that are actively engaged with Slovakia. Sincere thanks for a huge portion of enthusiastic work and support that comes from our friends in the Slovakia-Japan Associations in various cities.

Looking ahead to the future, it is with satisfaction to note that Slovaks and Japanese are deeply committed to further developing their flourishing relationship. I wish to express once again the sincere gratitude of the Slovak people to the Japanese people for their continuing friendship and support.

Further developing cordial ties

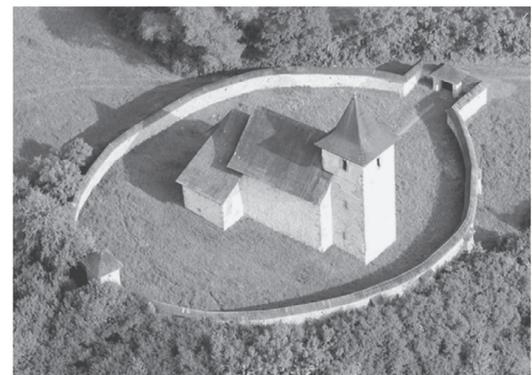
Ryotaro Tanose
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-SLOVAK
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP
LEAGUE

On behalf of the Japan-Slovak Parliamentary Friendship League, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Slovak Republic. Taking this opportunity, I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation for the assistance extended by the government and the people of the Slovak Republic after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Today, the relationship between Japan and the Slovak Republic has developed in a wide range of areas. Based on common and fundamental values such as democracy and the rule of law, Japan and Slovakia are tackling global issues together. Furthermore, both countries also cooperate closely in the framework of the V4 (Visegrad



Sacred structures: Slovakia is home to a number of wooden churches, such as the St. Nicholas Church (above), a UNESCO World Heritage site in Ruska Bystra, and the St. Paraskieva Church in Dobroslava (below left). The St. Matthew Church in Zolna (below right) is an example of late Romantic-early Gothic architecture. EMBASSY OF SLOVAKIA



Historic: Located in central Slovakia, Kremnica is a well-preserved medieval town, which was among the major gold mining centers in the Middle Ages, and its mint is the oldest operating in the world. EMBASSY OF SLOVAKIA

Group) plus Japan. In June, the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 plus Japan was held successfully under Slovakia's V4 presidency. An Energy Saving Seminar was also organized under the framework. As for the economic field, a number of Japanese companies have been operating in the Slovak Republic and it is expected that the economic relationship between both countries will deepen even further.

Cultural exchange is also ongoing in an active way. Recently, the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Slovak Philharmonic

Orchestra and Folklore Ensemble visited Japan and impressed Japanese audiences, while Japan Week was held in Bratislava in July. It is my great pleasure to be able to say that each country's culture is mutually accepted.

As president of the Japan-Slovak Parliamentary Friendship League, I should like to work actively to promote friendship and cooperation between our two countries. I send my best wishes to the people of Slovakia for the further prosperity and development of our cordial relationship.

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