
Lithuania National Day

Strengthening friendship and cooperation

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AMBASSADOR OF LITHUANIA

On the occasion of the 98th anniversary of the Restoration of the Statehood of the Republic of Lithuania, I am honored to extend, on behalf of the Lithuanian people and government, our warmest regards to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, as well as the government and people of Japan. I also take this occasion to congratulate my compatriots living in Japan.

The history of our state began more than 1,000 years



ago. Together with other European countries we have witnessed the great events that shaped the Europe of today, while participating in many of them. The Feb. 16, 1918, was a turning point in the history of our state, as Lithuania became a sovereign country again.

Lithuania established diplomatic relations with Japan in December 1922. Our relationship was reinforced by Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul, who, while working in Lithuania in 1939 and 1940, saved the lives of more than 6,000 Jewish refugees by issuing Japanese transit visas. Last year we commemorated the 75th anniversary of the “Visas for Life” issued by Sugihara, and held many events in his remembrance in both

Lithuania and Japan.

Last year was also marked by successful cooperation of Lithuanian and Japanese scientists with a number of bilateral scientific events being held, especially in the field of life sciences, which is rapidly developing in Lithuania. Additionally, new relationships were established between universities, enhancing the exchanges of students and scientific expertise.

Similarly gratifying tendencies were observed in bilateral economic and agricultural cooperation. We rejoice at the significant increase of interest from both sides in the history and culture of our countries, as well as in people-to-people relations. Last year’s statistics confirmed a 50 percent in-

crease in the number of tourists from Japan visiting Lithuania and vice versa.

I would like to cordially invite the Japanese people to visit our beautiful country located in the geographical center of Europe. Take a stroll in our pristine nature, marvel at the UNESCO-recognized architecture and nature sites, take a break in the quiet solitude of homesteads, try out some of the traditional Lithuanian crafts and definitely visit one of the numerous spas offering treatments using mineral water, amber and others.

On this special day I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all friends of Lithuania and hope for all that the ties of friendship between our countries continue to flourish.