

Romania National Day

Ongoing cultural, economic exchanges

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AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA

On the occasion of the National Day of Romania, it is my honor to express my deepest respect and convey heartfelt wishes of health and happiness to their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the government of Japan, and peace and prosperity to the Japanese people. It is a privilege for me to address the readers of The Japan Times for the first time as ambassador of Romania to Japan. A century ago, in 1916, Romania entered World War I on the side of the Allies. At the end of the war, on Dec. 1, 1918, Romania fulfilled its national aspiration, the unification of all historic provinces into the modern Romanian National Unitary State, a date that we celebrate as our National Day.



Today, Romania is a country with a strong national and European identity, with a rapidly developing economy and a vibrant social and cultural life. As a NATO member, Romania has proven itself as a reliable ally over the last decade through active involvement in the global fight against terrorism and combating non-conventional threats.

On Jan. 1, Romania will mark 10 years of EU membership. In this decade, we consolidated our profile inside the union as a dependable member, actively involved in the processes of redefining our collective role and aims, such as the new Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. We are also supporting, both in Brussels and here in Tokyo, the mutually beneficial bilateral projects and agreements that will further advance our already strong ties. In this respect, Romania supports the negotiations of the economic partnership agreement between the EU and Japan. A rapid conclusion of these negotiations would serve as a boost to our economies and would further promote development and improvement of commercial rules.

The shared values of democracy and rule of law are also the foundation of our renewed bi-

lateral partnership with Japan, as we continue our constant political dialogue both on governmental and parliamentary levels. In the coming years, we are looking forward to developing not only political ties, but also strong economic and trade cooperation, as well as a close collaboration in other fields, including culture, education and science and technology.

Overall, Romania's macro-economic situation is one of the strongest in the EU in terms of real gross domestic product growth, fiscal deficit, public debt, inflationary pressures and current account balance. The GDP growth rate was 3.7 percent in 2015 and the estimate for 2016 stands at 4.2 percent, one of the highest in the EU, with forecasts maintaining a positive outlook. Investment in Romania is also increasingly attractive, due to the favorable environment, stable economic growth, a dynamic and a well-educated population. It is the second-biggest market in Central and Eastern Europe, and its geographic location makes Romania a possible gateway from the EU toward the Caucasus, Middle East and North Africa.

We are happy to see major Japanese companies establishing themselves firmly in the Romanian market such as Japan Tobacco International, JTEKT (Koyo), Nomura Securities, Sumitomo Electric Wiring Systems, Yazaki, Takata, Mitsubishi, Makita and Fuji Magnetics to name just a few. Over 70 major Japanese companies have invested in Romania, creating 38,000 new jobs in 50 production facilities all over the country.

Bilateral trade has grown constantly over the several last years, but the true potential of this relationship is far greater than the actual \$450 million registered in the first nine months of this year. Romanian exports to Japan have diversified, with Romanian wines in particular being increasingly present in the local market, with very encouraging feedback from customers.

One of our main infrastructure projects — a new subway line connecting downtown Bucharest to the Henri Coanda International Airport — is being carried out with direct Japanese participation and financed in part through a yen loan agreement. The prelimi-

nary stages of the project are to be completed by the end of the year, allowing for the start of work early next year.

In science, the Extreme Light Infrastructure-Nuclear Physics Project in Magurele, near Bucharest, is the most advanced laser research facility in the world focusing on the study of photonuclear physics and its applications, benefits from the Japanese expertise of Kazuo Tanaka, who was recently appointed as scientific director. There are also important academic exchanges of students and scholarships through direct cooperation between top Romanian and Japanese universities.

People-to-people contacts are instrumental in bringing our countries closer together. We are witnessing an increased dialogue and cooperation between local authorities. Next year will mark the 40th anniversary of the first sister city agreement between the port city of Constanta and Yokohama. With the 2020 Tokyo Olympics fast approaching, we are grateful for the generous offer extended by the city of Musashino in western Tokyo, which has a close cooperation with Brasov, to host our athletes.

We would love to see more and more Japanese people



Bucharest EMBASSY OF ROMANIA

traveling to Romania, either for business or pleasure. Excellent tourist services add to the natural beauty, diversity and rich cultural heritage that can be discovered by the Japanese visitors. At the same time, in the past years, we have also recorded a growing number of Romanians visiting Japan, following the implementation of a visa waiver program for Romanian citizens, and the trend is growing.

Cultural exchanges continue to be a strong area of cooperation. The Japanese public had the opportunity to enjoy award-winning productions of New Romanian Cinema during the 2016 Tokyo International Film Festival, and our renowned artists performed on prestigious stages throughout Japan. Back home, the influential George Enescu International Competition 2016 in Bucharest saw young Japanese pianist Takuma Ishii reach the final.

In 2017, we will celebrate 100 years since the arrival of the first Romanian envoy to Japan. It is a good moment to take stock of the accomplishments of these 100 years of relations and lay the groundwork for the next century of cooperation and friendship.

Having just started my mission in Tokyo, I am looking forward to bringing my contribution to the strengthening of the bilateral ties between Romania and Japan.



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on the Occasion
of
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