

Romania National Day

Long-standing cooperation and friendship

TATIANA IOSIPER
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, as well as peace and prosperity to the Japanese people.

On Dec. 1, Romanians celebrate the unification, which occurred in 1918, of all our historic provinces into the modern Romanian National Unitary State and the fulfillment of our national aspiration for freedom, unity and dignity. Today, as we enter the year that marks the centenary of this historic moment, Romania presents itself as a country with a strong national and European identity, a rapidly developing economy and a vibrant social and cultural life.

Within the European Union, Romania has supported the negotiations of an eco-

nomie partnership agreement between the EU and Japan that will further advance our already strong ties. We are confident that this agreement is mutually beneficial and will boost our economies and promote further development and improvement of commercial rules. Hopefully, the agreement will be signed by the end of this year and its implementation will start in the beginning of 2019, coinciding with the semester when Romania will take on the rotating presidency of the European Union Council.

Over the last year, we worked toward further developing our bilateral partnership with Japan through maintaining a political dialogue, expanding trade cooperation, encouraging new Japanese investment and cultural exchanges.

Diversifying our trade relations and attracting new investments are key priorities for our government and Japan is one of the main countries where we focus our efforts.

We are happy to see that more than 70 Japanese companies are present in Romania, creating close to 40,000 jobs, in over 50 production facilities across the country. We know there is ample room for growing that presence, as well as achieving a substantial

increase in the volume of our bilateral trade.

The main project of bilateral cooperation — the new subway line connecting downtown Bucharest to the Henri Coanda International Airport — is shifting into gear and we expect a swift implementation. The successful completion of such an important undertaking will no doubt open the way for other projects in the future and will further increase the attractiveness of Romania for prospective Japanese investors.

Romania is slowly but surely regaining its status of the main industrial powerhouse in our region, a country that welcomes companies focused on innovation, with a sophisticated understanding of global economic trends. One example is the auto industry where we have shown the capacity to support and to encourage investors, including numerous Japanese parts suppliers, and we are determined to consolidate our profile and make this sector one of the country's brands.

Furthermore, the general economic environment is very positive. For the last two quarters, the gross domestic product growth has been the strongest among EU countries and we expect to finish the year above 5 percent year on year, thus consolidating our profile as an emerging market.

Besides the economic factors and the favorable geographic location that make Romania a gateway from the EU toward the Caucasus, Middle East and North Africa, probably the main asset of our country is our people. This human talent is best epitomized by the fact that worldwide, there is practically no major information technology and communication company without a significant Romanian presence. This has led many foreign companies to decide to establish a local presence to take advantage of the high degree of specialization and the competitiveness of our skilled labor, which in turn transformed the country into a regional and European ITC hub.

We will continue to encourage people-to-people contacts, cultural exchanges and the growth of tourism. Particularly, theater exchanges have grown steadily, with prestigious Japanese companies being present every year at the Sibiu Theatre Festival. Recently, the Metropolitan Theatre in Tokyo staged a production of Richard III by a Romanian team, led by the acclaimed director Silviu Purcarete, with a full Japanese cast; a performance that won rave reviews from critics.

In tourism, the number of Romanians



Council Square in Brasov EMBASSY OF ROMANIA

visiting Japan has grown consistently after the implementation of the visa waiver program and we hope to also see an increase in Japanese people traveling to Romania, to discover its natural beauty, diversity and rich cultural heritage.

We are also welcoming and supporting the dynamic cooperation between local authorities. This year we marked 40 years of a sister city agreement between Constanta and Yokohama, as well as 25 years of cooperation between Brasov and Musashino in Tokyo, with numerous cultural events and exchanges.

As we are looking forward to supporting the Romanian athletes that will compete at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, we engaged this year in a dialogue with the organizers and the local authorities of the host cities for our delegation, Musashino and Matsudo in Chiba

Prefecture, to which we are indebted for their generous offer and enthusiastic support.

Recently, we commemorated 100 years since the arrival of the first Romanian envoy to Japan, Nicolae Xenopol. It was a great opportunity to highlight the life and activity of this remarkable Romanian diplomat whose tireless efforts toward establishing bilateral ties came to a sudden halt, as he passed away just a few weeks after presenting his credentials to His Majesty Emperor Taisho. But his sacrifice was not in vain and on the foundation he laid in 1917, we built the strong bilateral ties that we enjoy today. Together with our Japanese partners, we are committed to building on past accomplishments and, based on the shared values of democracy and rule of law, to lay the groundwork for the next century of cooperation and friendship.

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

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