
Latvia National Day Special

In-person contacts deepen understanding

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Dear readers of The Japan Times, it is my honor to address you on the occasion of the 105th anniversary of the Republic of Latvia.

Since its inception, the Latvian state has witnessed

historical changes. It was established after World War I, an era of chaos and yearning for a new way forward. It flourished during the 1930s, when authoritarian regimes took hold in many countries of the world. In the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was hope that big geopolitical conflicts were behind us. Now, we once again find ourselves faced with new challenges.

The ongoing, unprovoked and criminal invasion of Ukraine by Russia has brought

immeasurable suffering to the people of Ukraine and continues to cause new uncertainties around the globe. Latvia is and will remain a strong supporter of Ukraine, with our aid reaching 1.3% of gross domestic product. We deeply appreciate Japan's principled position, especially during its G7 presidency this year, against Russia's war of aggression. I urge Japan, its government and people to continue supporting Ukraine.

The security of Europe and Asia is interlinked and remains one of Latvia's top priorities. Our security first and foremost depends on ourselves, on our own courage. The courage to see the truth, recognize who our true friends and enemies are, and to act.

Latvia is committed to working together with our partners in the EU and NATO, and with like-minded countries around the world. Japan is our main partner in Asia. This year, our prime ministers met on the margins of the NATO summit in Vilnius, our foreign ministers engaged in regular exchanges, and we consulted on defense issues. Our

parliaments and judiciary likewise played important roles in strengthening friendly relations between Latvia and Japan.

Contacts in business, culture and education are no less significant. I hope to see that the increased in-person contacts between our countries result in even stronger personal ties, more innovations, artistic excellence and deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's unique culture and traditions. The 50th Anniversary of Riga-Kobe Friendship next year will be an important event to appreciate achievements and to explore new avenues of cooperation.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all friends of Latvia in Japan. Thank you for your continuous support, dedication and many contributions in bringing our countries closer together.

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