

Syrian national day/world

Toward stronger Syria-Japan relations in all fields

Rania Alhaj Ali
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE SYRIAN
ARAB REPUBLIC

On the auspicious occasion of the 63rd anniversary of Syrian Independence Day and on behalf of President Bashar Al Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic, and the government and people of Syria, I have the honor to extend to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the government and friendly people of Japan our warmest greetings.



As the esteemed readers of The Japan Times know, this year marks also the 56th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Japan, marking deeper as well as stronger friendly bilateral relations between our two countries and peoples.

At the outset I would like to convey the appreciation of the government and people of Syria to Japan for the support extended to us, including through the JICA, in many fields throughout the years, especially in the economic sector.

And this appreciation is also extended for the kind support by the Japanese government to the Syrian government in helping us address the relevant needs of the enormous number of refugees who have sought refuge in Syria — some 1.5 million to date. We see this support as a clear commitment by Japan toward the noble cause of refugees all around the world and I will take this opportunity to say that we need this kind of support as long as there are refugees in Syria.

It gives me great pleasure to state that the bilateral visits between high-level officials and parliamentarians of the two countries have further strengthened the good relations between Syria and Japan as they keep open channels of dialogue and consultation on important matters for both sides, and for the international community. The most recent of which were the visits to Japan by Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Faysal Mikdad and the president of the Syrian-Japanese Parliamentary Friendship Association, Khudr Hussein.

Since Syria is geographically located at the far west of Asia in the heart of the Middle East, it is one of the main par-

ties to the Middle East peace process because parts of our land are occupied by Israel, so it is vital to highlight our position concerning this very important issue to us and to the whole world as well.

Establishing comprehensive peace in the Middle East has been and is our strategic choice. We seek a just and comprehensive peace according to international legitimacy as stated in United Nations Security Council Resolutions No. 242 and No. 338, and based on the principle of land for peace stipulated in the Madrid Formula, and the Arab Peace Initiative in which the Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights occupied by Israel in 1967, must be returned, for establishing peace with Israel.

And in this regard Syria has welcomed Japan's role in the Middle East peace process and the efforts exerted by the Japanese government envoy to the Middle East Dr. Tatsuo Arima, and calls for the further involvement of Japan in the peace process because we believe Japan is an important international player and can contribute more in this regard.

Also it is very important to re-highlight Syria's position toward the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Syria has called for many years in all relevant international forums and especially in the United Nations for the Middle East to be made a region free from all weapons of mass destruction. Syria has translated its words into deeds by tabling in 2003 an integrated draft resolution at the U.N. Security Council calling for the declaration of the Middle East as a weapons of mass destruction-free zone. Unfortunately, the draft resolution is still on the table and no action has been taken by the concerned powerful parties. Syria was a nonpermanent member of the Security Council from 2002 to 2003.

On the economic front, Syria has been affected by the world economic and financial crisis like every other country but continues to work to build a framework that encourages investment, which encompasses strong incentives for pioneer projects expected to play a strategic role in the Syrian economy for many years to come. President Assad has declared investment as a national goal, building on the fact that national as well as direct foreign investments form a stronger and more reliable engine for sustainable devel-



Syrian President Dr. Bashar Al Assad

opment in Syria. It's important to highlight that after adopting a market economy system several years ago, the role of the private sector is growing as it has become a major partner contributing and participating in all trade and investment fields. In addition, the government has taken steps in relation to import liberalization for many goods and set up the Syrian Investment Agency in 2007, and starting from Jan. 1, the "One-Stop Shop" has come into force.

In summarizing some of the important factors for investing in Syria, I must emphasize political and economical stability, local currency conversion rate stability and simplification of administrative procedures, accompanied by the adoption of legislation in 2007 to further motivate foreign and local investors. It is also important to announce that Syria and the European Union have recently signed with first initials the first EU-Syria Association Agreement.

On the social front, it is important to shed light on the efforts of Asma Al Assad, President Assad's wife, in supporting the national efforts of both governmental and nongovernmental entities to advance and enhance the status of the family as a whole, and empowerment of women, youth and the elderly, and the rights of children, as well as her efforts to promote quality education for all to enrich and strengthen Syrian society.

It is a great honor and fills me with pride to say that Syria and history cannot be separated as history and the beginnings of civilization started in Syria from 9000 B.C., when man settled and started agriculture, and where the first alphabet in the world was found in its heartland. In the third millennium B.C., many important civilizations, among them Assyrian, Sumerian, Phoenician, Aramaic, Roman, Persian, Arab and Islamic, flourished and prospered on its land, a land that embraced all religions. Syria is where the descendants of all those civilizations lived and are living to this day in harmony and tolerance regardless of their national, religious or ethnic affiliations; a harmony that is witnessed and recognized by the whole world.

This ancient history of Syria attracts tourists from all over the world, including Japan,

and attracts as well many foreign archaeological excavation missions to work on its land, among them the Japanese excavation missions who continue to make very significant discoveries in this important field.

Syrians are also very proud that UNESCO has added six sites in Syria to its World Heritage list: Damascus, Aleppo, Bosra, Palmyra, Crack des Chevaliers and the Salah Al Din citadel. I invite all Japanese to come to Syria to see these marvelous historical sites and to walk along the path of the famous Silk Road, which passed through Syria as one of its major stations for the trade convoys coming from the east (China, Japan), the west (European convoys) and the south (Arabian convoys). All of these convoys carried with their trade their heritage, culture and civilizations. Being a crossroads of civilizations and of the three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa) enriched Syria immensely.

Cultural cooperation between Syria and Japan is an important aspect of the bilateral relations, which is highly appreciated by the government and people of Syria since

it clearly shows Japan's keenness to protect and preserve the history of humanity, as well as to support cultural life in all fields and to spread its culture in the Arab world. This cooperation was crowned by the signing of several cooperation agreements between the two countries, including in the field of archaeological excavation missions, as well as between universities, which have seen the establishment of the Institute for Middle Eastern Scientific Studies in 1995 in Aleppo and a faculty for Japa-

nese literature at Damascus University a few years ago. The recent visit to Japan by Dr. Wael Mualla, president of Damascus University, further confirmed the importance of the continuation of this kind of valuable cooperation.

Syria and Japan have enjoyed cordial and friendly ties since the establishment of diplomatic relations, and as the years pass we look forward to stronger friendly relations in all fields and at all levels with the government and people of friendly Japan.



Silent witness: Aleppo's citadel is a magnificent symbol of Arab military architecture and evidence of the city's great past.

High-level visits strengthen bilateral bridges

Taro Nakayama
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-SYRIA
PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE
OF FRIENDSHIP

On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Syrian Arab Republic,

it is my great honor to extend my warmest congratulations to the people of the republic as chairman of the Japan-Syria Parliamentary League of Friendship.

Syria has maintained its unique position as the "crossroads of civilizations" throughout its history, which dates back to at least the fourth millennium B.C., developing

and cultivating a highly sophisticated society and culture of its own.

Today, Syria's geopolitical importance cannot be overemphasized as one of the key players to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, and stability in the region. I am convinced that Syria can play a positive and constructive role to this end.

I am extremely pleased that Japan and Syria have enjoyed cordial bonds of friendship and well-maintained bilateral relations since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1953. I sincerely hope that this cordial diplomatic relationship will be further strengthened in the coming years through more people-to-people contacts.

The Japan-Syria Parliamentary League of Friendship was established in 1991 with the view to deepening and enhancing our bilateral relations. At the end of last year, we received Khudr Hussein, president of the Syrian-Japanese Parliamentary Friendship Association, and had a fruitful meeting with him further deepening our friendship.

Through these exchanges, we would like to further develop the friendship between our countries in terms of scope and depth, including economic and cultural fields.

Finally, I wish to express my best wishes for the prosperity of the Syrian Arab Republic, and for the good health and happiness of its people.



Dramatic art: Built in the second century, Bosra's amphitheater is said to be the best-preserved Roman theater in the world. MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Congratulations
to the People of the Syrian Arab Republic
on the 63rd Anniversary of Their National Day

hotel IBIS
ROPPONGI
HOTEL IBIS ROPPOGI
http://www.ibis-hotel.com
phone:03-3403-4411 fax:03-3479-0609
14-4, Roppongi 7-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan

Congratulations
to the People of
the Syrian Arab Republic
on the 63rd Anniversary of Their
National Day

نهني الشعب السوري بمناسبة الذكرى السنوية الثالثة و الستين
لعيد الجلاء الوطني.

HOBICO., LTD.
Kojimachi KS Square 3F, 5-3-3, Kojimachi,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0083, Japan
Tel: 03-5210-4836, Fax: 03-5210-4379

Congratulations
to the People of
the Syrian Arab Republic
on the 63rd Anniversary
of Their National Day

T.Chatani & Co., Ltd.
Global Trading Firm

Nomura Fudosan Osaka Bldg.,
8-15, Azuchimachi 1-chome, Chuo-ku,
Osaka 541-0052, Japan
Tel: 06-6271-5321 Fax: 06-6271-5365

Congratulations
to the People of
the Syrian Arab Republic
on the 63rd Anniversary of
Their National Day

نهني الشعب السوري بمناسبة الذكرى
السنوية الثالثة و الستين لعيد الجلاء الوطني

TCI Techno Commerce International Co.,Ltd.
KINYO BLDG 2F, 1-6-13, KYOBASHI, CHUO-KU, TOKYO 104-0031 JAPAN
TEL:03-3561-3105 FAX:03-3561-3107