

Ukraine independence day

Young independent nation shows steady progress

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AMBASSADOR OF UKRAINE TO JAPAN

In every nation's spiritual and political life there are watershed years and events that mark its history, its consciousness, and define that nation's place and role in the course of the world civilization. In our history as well, we have an event that showed to the whole world the striving of the Ukrainian people for an independent, happy and prosperous life. That event took place in 1991 and was the culmination of the 1,000-year-long aspiration of the Ukrainian people for an independent country that could secure the successful cultural and political development of our society. That year our country's independence became a reality. Today Ukraine has its state emblem, flag, anthem and language.

Thus, 19 years ago, on Aug. 24, the Ukrainian parliament — the Verkhovna Rada — proclaimed the independence of Ukraine, one of the remarkable

political events in the history of our country.

Political structure

We are proud that a stable democratic government system has been established in Ukraine. This system is based on European values and democratic traditions, a market economy and a respect for human rights and democratic liberties such as freedom of the mass media and the rule of law. The assertion that the authority of Ukraine has a democratic origin is supported by the fact that during the last few years the opposition has come to power three times as a result of free and fair elections. As in other democratic countries, a highly competitive political environment is developing in Ukraine. The balance between the branches of government, main government institutions, the president, the Verkhovna Rada and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine is constantly improving. That is all incontrovertible proof that Ukrainian democracy is of a European character.

The year 2010 is a symbolic one for Ukraine: Free and democratic elections of the president of our country convincing-

ly prove the desire of the Ukrainian people to overcome long-existing inner political confrontations and to lay the foundation for a stable national power. A parliamentary coalition was promptly created that cooperated closely with the president to set up a capable government and executive axis. In a short period of time this new government was formed and parliament approved a State Program for Economic and Social Development, which fixed priority measures necessary for overcoming the consequences of the global financial crisis in Ukraine.

Economic prosperity

Ukraine has all the means to successfully minimize the negative consequences of the global recession. We already have the first indications of positive tendencies in the national economy. Business activity and industrial production are increasing. Tension in the financial sector is lowering. Unemployment is decreasing and new jobs are being created.

Since the beginning of this year, Ukraine has been gradually restoring the positive dynamics of economic growth. In the first half of 2010, gross domestic product (GDP) growth reached 6.3 percent and industrial output has increased by 12 percent, which confirms the positive trend in the recovery of the Ukrainian economy. Consequently, exports of goods and services in the first half of 2010 increased by 30.6 percent and imports by 25.8 percent.

At the initiative of President Viktor Yanukovich, the Program of Economic Reforms of Ukraine for 2010-2014 — "for a prosperous society, a competitive economy, effective government" — has been started. Concurrently, a Committee of Economic Reforms was created in order to deliberate a national comprehensive development strategy for reforming our economy.

The cooperation of Ukraine with international financial institutions has all the prerequisites to be effective and fruitful. For instance, on July 28, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund approved around \$15.15 billion for a 29-month standby arrangement for Ukraine in support of the government's economic adjustment and reform program. An initial disbursement equivalent to \$1.89 billion is available immediately, with subsequent disbursements subject to quarterly reviews. This decision of the International Monetary Fund shows a high level of trust on the part of the international community toward the new power of Ukraine and reflects the support of the international community for Ukraine's reform course. The resumption of Ukraine's cooperation with the IMF gives an important positive signal to international investors and will allow the country to raise funds from other international financial institutions.

Foreign policy goals

A key priority of the foreign policy of Ukraine is European integration with the ultimate goal of obtaining full membership in the European Union. The wish to integrate into the EU is based on the desire of the Ukrainian people for historic and cultural reunion with the community of European nations. In this connection I would like to note that recent talks with the EU confirmed that we are on track toward signing an Association Agreement with the EU, the establishment of a free trade zone and the introduction of a visa-free regime for Ukrainians.

The further fruitful development of strategic partnerships with the Russian Federation and the United States remains an extremely important dimension of our foreign policy. Ukraine's relations with the Russian Federation at the present stage are a real and practi-

cal instrument for deciding important issues for both countries. For instance, the national border demarcation process has started and a new format of the friendly cooperation based on pragmatic principles has been launched. As a result, the bilateral turnover of goods is growing. Similarly, intensification of high-level contacts between Kiev and Washington proves the mutual desire of our countries to deepen cooperation in all possible directions.

On July 1, the Verkhovna Rada passed a new law titled "On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policy." According to the law, a nonaligned status is the main benchmark of the security of Ukraine. In addition, the document says that Ukraine will take part in developing and improving a European system of collective security and continue constructive cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and other military and political blocs in matters of mutual interest.

I should also mention that Ukraine confirmed its status as a nonnuclear state that actively supports the nonproliferation of nuclear materials and technologies. The U.S. along with other members of the international community highly praised the decision of our country to get rid of highly enriched uranium stockpiles during the Nuclear Security Summit on April 12. This reaffirms Ukraine's global leadership in the sphere of nuclear security and nonproliferation. Ukraine encourages a deepening dialogue on the nonproliferation of nuclear materials as a part of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and supports the initiative to ban nuclear testing. President Yanukovich is convinced that the idea of a "world without nuclear weapons" can unite mankind as a fundamental humanistic idea of the 21st century.

The concerns about nuclear safety in Ukraine are closely connected with overcoming the consequences of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

At this point, I would like to express our appreciation to a Hiroshima-based civic group The Stone for Peace for presenting Ukraine in May with a Stone for Peace, which was hit by the 1945 atomic bombing and is engraved with an image of a Buddhist goddess of mercy. More than 100 nations have received such paving stones since the donation campaign started in 1991, but for us the donation of this stone has an especially significant value because only two countries in the world — Japan and Ukraine — have been terribly affected and experienced the negative aftermath of a wartime or peacetime atomic explosion.

Relations with Japan

Ukraine highly appreciates the advancing and dynamic development of a political dialogue with Japan that affirms the willingness of both sides to maintain a sustainable development of relations and demonstrates our readiness to intensively deepen and widen the current cooperation. The high level of bilateral cooperation between our countries within the framework of international organizations reflects the traditionally friendly and supportive nature of our relationship, which has intensively developed since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992.

Two important institutional mechanisms that play an important role in strengthening our relations were established in 2006: the Ukraine-Japan Cooperation Committee Meeting at the foreign ministers level and the Ukrainian-Japanese Commission on cooperation in science and technology. We highly welcomed the start of a new fruitful and promising dia-



Renewed splendor: The restored St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery, built in the Middle Ages, towers over Kiev's Podil neighborhood. MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF UKRAINE

logue in the economic sphere between the Coordinating Council under the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine and the Committee on Ukraine of the Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) in 2007.

Japan is one of the biggest investors in our economy from Asia-Pacific countries. By the end of March of this year the total amount of direct Japanese investment into the Ukrainian economy accounted for \$114.5 million, an amount that is steadily rising. Currently, 24 companies with Japanese capital are operating in Ukraine. All of the biggest Japanese trading companies, including Mitsubishi, Marubeni, Mitsui, Itochu, Sojitz and Sumitomo have representative offices in Kiev.

Ukraine has many attractions for the Japanese investor. It is a huge market with a population of 46 million people, a well-educated workforce and a wide range of raw materials. Among the priority sectors for investment identified by our government are machinery, agriculture, the food industry, the automobile industry, household electronics, space technology, telecommunications, alternative energy and transport infrastructure.

Last year marked a breakthrough in the bilateral eco-

nomical relations between Ukraine and Japan. An important aspect of this new phase of economic cooperation is that, in addition to traditional infrastructure projects and trade, a number of joint economic initiatives are being carried out in new areas. These initiatives include energy saving and environmental protection projects, in which Japan, where the Kyoto Protocol to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed, is definitely a pioneer.

For Ukraine, cooperation with Japan in the framework of the Kyoto Protocol is a political and economic priority because it will bring with it the latest Japanese technology for the modernization of the Ukrainian industrial and public sector. This year we are working very closely with the Japanese government and private companies to implement joint energy-saving projects in Ukraine, such as coal mine degasification; modernization of heating systems for schools, hospitals and houses; installation of energy-saving lamps; waste utilization and many others.

In 2012 Ukraine, together with Poland, is going to host the UEFA European Football Championship EURO 2012. For Ukraine, it will be the first time

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Longtime favorite: Yalta, in southern Ukraine, is a historic retreat overlooking the Black Sea and made more famous by a conference held during World War II. CRIMEA ADMINISTRATION

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Ukraine independence



Pastoral: Traditional windmills still dot the landscape of Ukraine. MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF UKRAINE

Relations with Japan involve investments, nuclear security, culture

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to host a major soccer championship. In this regard, receiving foreign investment and financial support for infrastructure projects is a topical issue for Ukraine. This event is expected to drive billions in additional investment into our economy, which will be used for the construction of highways, stadiums, airports and hotels.

We also expect that Japanese companies see a lot of opportunities for profitable investment in our country in the framework of preparation for EURO 2012. I would like to note that in the wake of the European Football Championship the Japanese government gave the first yen loan under the Official Development Assistance (ODA) program for reconstruction of the biggest Ukrainian airport, Boryspil. This will allow for an increase in passenger flow during this international event.

Another prospective area for Ukraine-Japan bilateral cooperation is in agriculture. In the context of the worsening problem of the world's food supply, Japanese companies are becoming more and more

interested in doing agricultural business with Ukraine. For example, in recent years Ukraine started to supply corn and wheat to the Japanese market and in the previous years Ukraine was one of the major suppliers of powdered milk.

Considering that global demand for food is expected to surge in the coming years, agriculture has a real potential to turn Ukraine into the breadbasket of not only Europe but of the whole world. Currently, Ukraine is among the top five world exporters of grain. In 2008 we had the highest grain crop in our history — 53 million tons. This year agricultural experts expect a grain crop of more than 47 million tons. Every year we export about 20 million tons of grain in the world market. Considering the enormous potential in this area we welcome the business of Japanese companies.

Cultural exchange

I would like to highlight the existing of the high level of cultural cooperation between our countries and to point out the importance of the successful annual performances in Ja-

pan of well-known Ukrainian national theaters, artists, groups, musicians who bring our two countries and cultures closer. At the same time I'm glad to inform the readers that interest toward Japanese culture is significantly increasing in Ukraine. Japan itself, its culture, music, movies, calligraphy, "ikebana," tea ceremony, martial arts, "anime" and manga are becoming more and more popular among Ukrainians. In addition, Japanese cuisine has many admirers in Ukraine.

Japanese classic and modern literature is also very popular in Ukraine. For example, the works of Japanese poet Matsuo Basho are studied at the fifth grade level in Ukrainian schools.

During the Japanese film festivals in Ukraine the cinemas are filled to capacity. The famous Japanese director, actor and artist Takeshi Kitano especially has many admirers in Ukraine.

Every year, sumo wrestling, one of the traditional Japanese martial arts, gains more and more popularity in Ukraine. I hope that one day Ukrainian sumo wrestlers will be able to step onto the "dohyo" (a sumo ring) in the Ryogoku Kokugikan sumo hall in Tokyo and honorably represent our country. Ukrainian sumo wrestlers have a great example to follow: The father of the 48th "yokozuna" (grand champion) Taiho, a distinguished former sumo wrestler, famous among all sumo fans, was Ukrainian.

I believe that in order to further strengthen cultural cooperation and deepen mutual understanding it would be very worthwhile and rewarding to organize on a regular basis a Month of Ukrainian Culture in Japan and a Month of Japanese Culture in Ukraine. We had a good expe-

rience holding such cultural events in 2006.

Furthermore, we welcome the intensification of relations between our countries at the sister-cities level between both Odessa and Yokohama and Kiev and Kyoto. This year we celebrate the 45th anniversary of the establishment of sister-city relations between Odessa and Yokohama. Year 2011 will mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of sister-cities relations between Kyoto and Kiev. In celebration of these anniversaries there will be many commemorative cultural events in both countries.

Last but not the least an important area of cooperation between our countries is tourism. My country has everything to satisfy the most demanding traveler — a rich cultural and historical heritage, which can be experienced by visits to ancient churches, monasteries and castles; diverse nature that encompasses breathtaking sea views and beaches on the Crimean peninsula, open steppes, beautiful mountains and curative natural mineral waters.

The reader will have a chance to see a small piece of Ukraine at the JATA (Japan Association of Travel Agents) World Tourism Congress & Travel Fair, which will be held in Tokyo from Sept. 24-26. Ukraine will be presented there in three major themes: a rich historical heritage, delicious Ukrainian food and the European Football Championship EURO 2012.

In conclusion, I would like to say that in celebrating the 19th anniversary of the independence of Ukraine, our country faces the future with confidence and believes that its continuous, progressive movement forward will guarantee peace, happiness and prosperity of its people.

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