

Italy national day

Continuing to deepen friendly relations with Japan

The following is a brief interview with Italian Ambassador Vincenzo Petrone on the occasion of the Republic Day of Italy, celebrated every June 2.

Please give us a brief overview of bilateral relations between Italy and Japan.

Bilateral relations between Italy and Japan are, and have traditionally been, very friendly and dynamic.

Italy and Japan share the same set of basic principles of freedom, democracy and social justice, which makes them stand very close within the international community. Our people feel naturally close to each other as shown once more by the many expressions of sympathy received from the Japanese people and institutions for the loss of lives and extensive damage caused by the earthquakes that struck northern Italy in the last few days. These deeply rooted feelings of friendship are a powerful driver for the constant strengthening and deepening of our relationship, and indeed a source of encouragement for all of us.

At the same time, Italy and Japan share problems that are typical of modern and advanced societies: aging population in mature economies, the quest for energy resources that are respectful of the environment, just to mention a few. I believe that our cooperation in providing answers and building solutions to the common challenges faced by our societies will be the privileged field to develop our relationship in the years to come.

The recent visit to Japan of Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti has helped highlight the wide range of interests that we



Vincenzo Petrone,
ambassador of Italy

share, in particular in the economic and commercial field. The upcoming visit of Italian Minister of Defense Giampaolo Di Paola in June confirms the excellent state of our relations and its renewed dynamism.

What are some possibilities for strengthening the economic and commercial relationship?
Economic and commercial relations between Italy and Japan are positive and well-balanced. I am pleased that in 2011, despite having been a difficult year for Japan indeed, Italian exports grew a hefty 18 percent, especially thanks to our export of pharmaceutical products that are now our most significant export item to Japan.

However, in a constantly moving world, I feel it is necessary to continuously find ways to help our economies to grow.

In my point of view, there is today a great potential in our commercial relations that is still untapped, mostly due to the many obstacles that sometimes discourage bilateral trade. This is why Italy, whose economy is deeply dependant on exports, is supporting the efforts to start negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA)

between the European Union and Japan, provided that this is an ambitious agreement and that the Japanese government undertakes a concrete and credible road map for the elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade. I hope it will soon be possible to clear the market of these obstacles and foster trade for the benefit of Japanese and Italian consumers and companies.

In addition, I believe that further strengthening of our economic relations will come from the package of reforms adopted by the government of Prime Minister Monti that through a balanced mix of structural reforms, involving the pension system, the labor market and the cut in public spending, has promoted a strategy for growth and fiscal consolidation that has been praised internationally and positively noted also in Japan.

In this regard, it is encouraging to see that in the last year Japanese companies have turned increased attention toward Italy.

Last April, Nidec Corp. bought the Italian precision motor manufacturer Ansaldo Sistemi Industriali; a few weeks ago NTT DoCoMo acquired Buongiorno, an Italian company specializing in applications for smartphones; while Fiat and Mazda have recently announced their plans for a joint development of a sports car that could be the first step of a broader alliance among the two leading car manufacturers.

These recent developments confirm a growing trend that appears to be very promising, especially in the field of renewable energies. As a country that lacks natural resources and that did not develop a nuclear energy industry, in the past decades Italy gained great expertise in the

renewables field and our experience is now receiving great attention in Japan. An important partnership established between Enel and Sharp for the production of solar panels in Sicily is leading the way for a further strengthening of our cooperation in the field of green energy and the smart management of electricity.

What kinds of Italian events are planned in Japan this year?

At this moment, we are focused on the organization of the second edition of the Italian wine week that, starting Nov. 12, will gather in Tokyo the most renowned Italian winemakers to present the quality and variety of Italian wine, which is becoming more and more popular among Japanese consumers.

We have under way an exhibition on Leonardo da Vinci e L'idea della Bellezza at the Bunkamura Museum in Tokyo, while in the autumn world-renowned pianist Maurizio Pollini will be playing in Tokyo. Let me mention here the Italian Cultural Institute in Tokyo, which organizes various initiatives and has become a point of reference for the study of the Italian language in Tokyo.

I can also anticipate that, building on the success of previous editions, at the end of this year we will present Italy in Japan 2013, a large-scale project of integrated promotion that will bring to Japan the best of Italian culture, design, manufacturing and lifestyle.

What are your thoughts on the recent Japanese film "Thermae Romae" that uses Roman baths as a setting?

I have heard of the movie and I know that it was made from a very successful manga series

written by Mari Yamazaki, but I haven't had a chance to see it yet.

Spas have long been a traditional aspect of life both in Japan and in Italy, still, before Yamazaki, not many people were fully aware of this common trait of our cultures regarding the care for the body.

The Italian Tourism Board has always been very active in presenting the tourism opportunities related to thermal baths in Italy, an option that more and more Japanese are considering when visiting Italy. The success of "Thermae Romae" could indeed bring renewed interest by the Japanese public for leading Italian spas.

Are there any special activities planned for the areas affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake?

As a country particularly exposed to earthquakes, Italy has been strongly touched by the events of March 11, 2011. Italians have helped Japan and the Tohoku area since the very early stages



after the disaster. Our community in Japan has set up an organization, Italians for Tohoku, whose humanitarian activities were widely reported by the Japanese media, while several well-known Italian companies have provided important donations.

Most importantly, knowing that support is not only a necessity in the aftermath of a disaster, but a long-term, continued need for affected populations, Italians are still carrying on their activities in support of the Tohoku area, focusing especially in supporting young students' educational and recreational activities. To give you an example, on the occasion of the celebrations of our National Day, we will inaugurate a new "library bus" (a traveling library) realized with the contribution of the Italian community in Japan and an important Italian ship-



Warm hospitality: Located in Tuscany, Montecatini Terme has been one of Italy's major "terme" (thermal baths) destinations since Roman times. FOTOTECA ENIT

ping company, to be donated to the municipality of Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture.

How have the recent financial events in Europe affected Italy's relations abroad, especially in regards to Japan?

It is still early to judge the impact of the recent financial events in Europe on Italy and on its relations with Japan as these events are still evolving. What I can say

is that Japan has proved and is proving to be a very close partner of Europe in a very challenging juncture for the EU.

Europe today sees the impending challenge of integrating more deeply its common political, economic and financial architecture. The Italian government is at the forefront of this process, as it has always been the case in the most delicate moments of EU integration history.

Elio Orsara & Kioi Corporation Congratulations on the Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Republic of Italy!

Elio
Locanda Italiana

*Catering
Antica Forneria*

VERA ITALIA
ITALIAN LIFESTYLE ONLINE
RECOMMENDED BY *Elio*

2-5-2 Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
Tel: 03-3239-6771
www.elio.co.jp
www.elio.co.jp/anticaforneria
www.veraitalia.jp

Congratulations on the Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Republic of Italy

Droplets from the Adriatic Sea
Glittering Venetian Beads Exhibition
Apr. 20 to Nov. 25, 2012



HAKONE GLASS FOREST

940-48 Sengokuhara, Hakone-machi, Ashigarashimo-gun, Kanagawa-ken 250-0631
TEL: 0460-86-3111 FAX: 0460-86-3114 http://ciao3.com

Treat yourself to a genuine Italian cuisine
in a true Italian atmosphere!

COLOSSEO
Italian Owned & Managed

★PLEASE CALL FOR RESERVATIONS

OSAKA : Tel. (06) 6252-2024
Lo Scoglio : Tel. (06) 6341-1235
(HANSHIN DEP. 10F)
E-mail: colosseo@colosseo.co.jp

IMPORT OF FINE WINES, FOODS, LADIES WEAR, SHOES, ETC.

MEMO'S CO., LTD.

President: Dr. Cantatore Domenico

OSAKA: Tel: (06) 6264-5151/3 Fax: (06) 6266-0747
TOKYO: Tel: (03) 3486-5656 Fax: (03) 3486-5710

E-mail: memos@memos.co.jp http://www.memos.co.jp
http://www.rakuten.co.jp/itamono