

Ukraine independence day

Twenty-one years to stability, modernization

Mykola Kulynich
AMBASSADOR OF UKRAINE

Twenty-one years ago, on Aug. 24, 1991, the most significant event in Ukrainian history took place: the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) of Ukraine adopted the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine. That day became the milestone in the history of the development of the Ukrainian people, the mighty impetus for unity of the Ukrainians in the world, inspired work for the sake of peace and good will in our common home.



Ukraine began a new independent life based on solid potential inherited from the disintegrated Soviet Union, a feature that favorably distinguished it from other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. The transition to a market economy proved very difficult for the nation. Yet the country has been showing economic growth for many years running. Now the young country is confidently integrating into the global economy.

Thanks to the political stability established in the country it has an investment climate favorable as never before. This means an opportunity to modernize the economy, introduce the latest technologies, build new factories and create jobs. In addition, Ukraine continues its path of reforms. The country is developing, taking into account the European experience and improving the standards of life for its citizens.

The key priority of the foreign policy of Ukraine is European integration with an orientation to enter the European Union. This is the primary vector of our development, which determines the content of social transformation and basic orientation of our foreign and domestic policy. The wish to integrate with the European Union reflects the interests of the Ukrainian people for historical and cultural reunion with the community of European nations. The other direction of the foreign policy of Ukraine is close partnership with Russia. Strategic relations with the U.S. have been and remain an important part of our foreign policy.

Ukraine is a country that voluntarily renounced its nuclear weapons arsenal, which was completely removed from its territory. Having agreed to such an unprecedented move, Ukraine conducts a consistent policy in nonproliferation and fighting nuclear terrorism. Our country meets all relevant international obligations. Ukraine is a member of all international conventions and protocols that regulate vari-

ous aspects of combating terrorism, including the nuclear one. Ukraine's priority attention to nuclear security is more than understandable, given the problems of overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, which has a global dimension.

Ukraine praises the deepening of dialogue on nonproliferation of nuclear materials within the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and supports the initiative to ban nuclear testing. Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich is convinced that the idea of a world without nuclear weapons can unite mankind as a fundamental humanistic idea of the 21st century.

One of the most important events of this year for Ukraine was Euro 2012, the European soccer championship, which was hosted by Ukraine and Poland between June 8 and July 1. Ukraine's preparation for Euro 2012 served as a powerful incentive for major reconstruction of the road infrastructure, rail and air transport.

Euro 2012 in Ukraine and Poland was fantastic, with a unique atmosphere, and the host nations have set new standards for the level of the tournament. This is what UEFA President Michel Platini said at a press conference in Kiev after the final match of this tournament. He also stressed that Euro 2012 has become the subject of great pride for the hosts of the competition.

The Ukrainian economy has demonstrated positive dynamics the second straight year after the world financial crisis. Real gross domestic product (GDP) is growing on average by 5 percent in 2010 and 2011. In 2011 the industrial production index grew by 7.3 percent. Agricultural production, one of the booming industries in Ukraine, grew by 17.5 percent. Exports of goods and services increased by 34 percent in 2011. Fixed capital investments increased by 21 percent. Personal income grew by 10 percent, while inflation was at 4.6 percent in 2011. Growth in the industrial sector was mainly attributable to the export-oriented sectors of the economy, with the main foreign markets being Europe and CIS states. By the way, during 2009-2010 Ukraine became the world's third largest grain exporter. Ukraine is also No. 1 in world barley exports. Moreover, in 2011 Ukraine became the third-largest corn supplier in the world. Overall, in 2011 Ukraine increased its agricultural exports by 30 percent. Growth of industrial production and export-oriented sectors of the economy combined with the personal income increase and macroeconomic stability in Ukraine to provide a positive forecast of the economic development of Ukraine.

Today, Ukraine has a profound, high level of comprehensive cooperation with Japan, which was raised by our two countries to the level of global partnership. Mutual approaches and positions concerning solutions for many current international matters and the absence of any signs of problems in political cooperation between Ukraine and Japan encourage further intensification of both countries' potential and build a strong foundation for productive development in all spectrums of relations. At the current stage, Ukrainian-Japanese relations continue intensive development in the light of successful results of the official visit of President Yanukovich to Japan on Jan. 18-21, 2011.

It's my great pleasure to emphasize that our country, as a true friendly partner of Japan, immediately expressed its readiness to provide necessary assistance for overcoming the effects of the catastrophic events of March 11, 2011. Ukraine was among the first states to offer humanitarian aid, technical and expert assistance to Japan. Today we have a very high level of cooperation in the sphere of prevention and elimination of the consequences of nuclear power plant emergencies.

Chernobyl, Fukushima

Last year's keynote event in the framework of the Ukrainian-Japanese cooperation in response to the nuclear emergencies was the visit of a Japanese parliamentary delegation to Chernobyl in September, headed by Lower House Speaker Takahiro Yokomichi. The delegation met with Ukrainian officials, studied the experience of Ukraine in the mitigation of the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident and saw with their own eyes the current situation on-site. The visit was the first milestone that facilitated the creation of a legal basis for further cooperation in the sphere of post-disaster response to nuclear accidents.

The next key event in this context was the official visit to Japan by Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Volodymyr Lytvyn and members of the Ukrainian parliament March 7-12, 2012, at the invitation of Speaker Yokomichi. During this visit both sides considered the prospects of cooperation between Japan and Ukraine in the sphere of elimination of the consequences of nuclear power plant accidents, discussed a number of political and economic cooperation issues, as well as to demonstrate solidarity and support to Japan in connection with the anniversary of the tragedy and honoring the memory of those affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which triggered the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant disaster. On March 11, Chairman Lytvyn attended the commemorative ceremony in Natori, Miyagi Prefecture.

The agreement between Ukraine and Japan concerning cooperation to advance aftermath response to accidents at nuclear power stations was signed by the Minister of Emergencies of Ukraine Viktor Baloga and Foreign Minister Koichiro Genba on April 18 in Tokyo.

In this connection I would like to stress that for the first time in international practice the two countries that suffered from the world's largest nuclear power plant accidents created the legal framework to advance their cooperation in bringing together the scientific and technical capacity and resources, as well as the use of knowledge and experience of professionals and experts from both countries in overcoming the consequences of accidents at nuclear power plants.

On July 26, the first meeting of the Japan-Ukraine joint committee for the cooperation to advance aftermath response to accidents at nuclear power stations was held in Tokyo. I am sure that the activity of this committee will promote effective exchange of experiences by our experts

in overcoming the aftermath of these emergencies, including elaboration of joint approaches to prevent such disasters and contribute to the safety of using the "peaceful atom" by the international community in general.

In April, I was so very pleased when the Lower House of the Diet unanimously adopted a resolution on the strengthening of friendly relations between Japan and Ukraine in the presence of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and Minister Baloga.

I would like to add several important facts that demonstrate the high level of our cooperation in the above-mentioned sphere: during the last half a year more than eight official Japanese delegations visited Ukraine to explore the possibilities of using Ukraine's experience in overcoming the consequences of the nuclear disaster. At the same time, 15 leading Ukrainian post-Chernobyl experts and scientists were invited to Japan to share their knowledge and skills.

Strengthening relations

Friendly relations between our two countries create a favorable basis for economic cooperation. Our bilateral trade is growing with each year at a dynamic pace that demonstrates the high potential of our economic ties. Automobiles are the main exports of Japan to Ukraine followed by industrial machinery. Japan Tobacco, for example, is one of the leading players in the tobacco industry of Ukraine. Ukrainian exports to Japan are mainly metals, alloys and ore, as well as grains. For example, for the five months of the current year Ukrainian exports to Japan grew more than four times mainly due to the purchase of Ukrainian corn. In this regard I would like to point out that the agricultural sector of Ukraine is one of the most dynamically developing and it has very huge export potential.

At the same time, we are interested in more active cooperation in the investment and



Cooperative response: Minister of Emergencies of Ukraine Viktor Baloga (center), with Ukrainian Ambassador Mykola Kulynich (right), visits the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in April during his official visit to Japan. EMBASSY OF UKRAINE

technological sphere with Japan as one of the leaders of foreign direct investments and technology transfers. Direct Japanese investments in Ukraine amount to roughly \$300 million, which leaves much to be desired taking into account the potential of our economies. Cooperation in energy-saving technologies was pioneered with Japan under the Kyoto Protocol mechanism of the Green Investment Scheme whereby Ukraine sold its excess quotas of greenhouse emissions to Japan in exchange for investments in greening activities. Now Japanese companies are implementing a number of energy-saving projects in Ukraine.

We hope that Japanese companies will explore the opportunities of investment cooperation with Ukraine more actively on a broader scale. With this in mind, a Japanese-Ukrainian Economic Council was established in Tokyo in 2010 to promote business ties with Ukraine. The head of the council is Hakuo Yanagisawa, a former Diet member who devoted much of his efforts to the development of close ties with Ukraine during his parliamentary tenure. The council is com-

prised of Japanese companies wishing to establish long-term cooperation with Ukrainian partners, including Japan Tobacco, Kobe Steel, JFE Steel, MHI, Toyota and others. Other big players such as Itochu, Sojitz, Sumitomo, Marubeni, Mitsui are also actively exploring the opportunities of the Ukrainian market and have opened offices in Kiev.

With the view to give important additional impetus to the development of economic cooperation between Ukraine and Japan and to boost investment ties, a draft Agreement on Reciprocal Protection and Promotion of Investments is being worked out now by experts of both sides. We hope that the agreement will be signed soon. Also, in November in Osaka an investment forum titled "Investment opportunities of Ukraine" will be held.

We have a good record of cooperation with Japan in the framework of GUAM+Japan. GUAM is the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development embracing four regional democracies: Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The participation of Japan adds substantial value to the elaboration

of projects by GUAM members in the spheres of energy and transport. There is also an additional, important topic of our mutual dialogue within this framework — promotion of tourism between Japan and GUAM member states. We have made substantial efforts with our Japanese partners to promote common GUAM tourism products on the Japanese market. With this in mind Ukraine has been in touch with Japanese authorities to establish direct, regular flights between our countries. As a first step on this way the Ukrainian and Japanese aviation companies have agreed to launch direct charter flights between Ukraine and Japan from August through October this year to test the market capacity.

In closing, I take this opportunity to sincerely invite readers of The Japan Times to visit Ukraine. Ukrainians are hospitable and kind. It is worth visiting my country to feel its spirit and atmosphere. No one will remain indifferent to the beauty of Ukraine. You can hardly find a tourist who has been to Ukraine once and did not want to come back to see it again.

Welcome to Ukraine!

Congratulations
to the People of Ukraine
on the Occasion of
the 21st Anniversary of
Their Independence

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