

Georgia national day

Georgia looks toward expanded cooperation with Japan

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AMBASSADOR OF GEORGIA

I am greatly honored to have a chance to address readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the Independence Day of Georgia. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my cordial greetings to the Imperial family, the government and marvelous people of Japan. It is my pleasure to convey congratulations on the Independence Day of our country to the small Georgian community in Japan.

After being annexed in 1801,



Georgia declared independence from the Russian Empire on May 26, 1918. The newly established Democratic Republic of Georgia was unable to withstand the Red Army invasion in February 1924 that resulted to the installation of a communist regime. Shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia's independence was restored in accordance with the Act of May 26, 1918. A declaration of independence was unanimously passed by the Georgian Supreme Council on April 9, 1991, the second anniversary of the tragedy when a peaceful anti-Soviet demonstration was dispersed by the Soviet Army in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Today, the free world is challenged by expansionism once

again endangering not only the Black Sea region, but international stability, the principles of nonaggression and territorial inviolability and international law and order. It is unacceptable that the fate of states, their future and territorial integrity is affected through the pressure of another country and by violent interference. We expect that all states, including Russia, respect the sovereign right and freedom of each state to build relations of their choice, as enshrined in the OSCE Helsinki Final Act.

I wish to express deep gratitude to Japan for the long-standing and solid, enormous moral and material support of Georgia in the process of its democratic transformation.

Georgia made a significant

democratic breakthrough in 2012 by achieving our first peaceful transfer of power through parliamentary elections. By conducting fair and transparent presidential elections under unprecedented amicable and constructive circumstances in October 2013, we demonstrated a solid step forward in the consolidation of democracy. We share the common European values and fundamental principles and are determined to continue the unwavering path of building a stronger and more effective democratic state where human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected.

European and Euro-Atlantic integration represents a long-term strategic goal of Georgia's foreign policy, which is a na-

tional idea, supported by the Georgian people and all major political parties. The facilitation of the process of ending occupation and restoring the country's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees is our national objective as well. We highly value Japan's steadfast position toward Georgia's territorial integrity.

On Nov. 29, 2013, at the Vilnius Summit we initialed the Association Agreement with EU, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area FTA agreement, which will be signed in June. We consider this agreement as a major milestone for bilateral cooperation.

The government of Georgia elaborated a draft 2020 Strategy for Socioeconomic Development, which aims to ensure a long-term, sustainable and inclusive economic growth in Georgia. The government implemented wide-ranging economic reforms that have resulted in a rapidly growing economy and dramatically improved investment climate. For the last few years Georgia has been among the top ten countries in the world in terms of favorable business conditions. Georgia was ranked eighth in the world in ease of doing business in the new "Doing Business 2014" report recently released by the World Bank. I'd

like to underline the intention of the government to facilitate the increase of Japanese investments in the energy, manufacturing, logistics and service hub development, agriculture and tourism sectors.

Today Georgia is a key link of the Southern Corridor and the shortest transit route between Western Europe and Central Asia for transportation of oil, gas and dry cargo. The oil and gas pipelines going through Georgian territory are the only export route for supplying natural resources from the Caspian Sea basin to the Mediterranean while bypassing Russian territory. Moreover, Georgia is an important part of all transit projects to be implemented within the frame of the Southern Corridor.

Georgia has the second richest hydro resources per capita in the world. It has a well-developed power transmission infrastructure, linking the country with all its neighbors. Growing energy demand from neighboring and European countries puts Georgia in a position to become a significant provider of green energy in the mid- and long-term.

Georgia was historically part of the ancient Silk Road, a transcontinental trade route connecting Asia with the Mediterranean region. Georgia, with an outsized strategic importance and more than 3,800 years of statehood history, is regarded as a birthplace of European civilization. Discovery



Top, view of Old Tbilisi. Bottom, 2,200-year-old Khertvisi Fortress in Georgia's Meskheti Region. EMBASSY OF GEORGIA

of 1.8 million-year-old Dmanisi hominids just south of Tbilisi proves this fact. It should also be noted that out of the 14 written languages of the world one is represented by the Georgian alphabet. Recognizing the uniqueness of traditional Georgian Qvevri wine-making, its global importance and cultural and social value, in 2013 the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of Non-Material Cultural Heritage placed the 8,000-year-old living tradition on the World Heritage list.

Ancient history and unique culture is partly what attracts millions of tourists to Georgia. The country has an incredibly rich landscape and more biodiversity than some continents. We have the highest mountains in Europe, eight national parks, 2,400 mineral water springs and 25 unique

spa resorts. I'm happy to note the growing number of visitors from Japan, which in 2013 increased by 48 percent compared to 2012.

More than two decades have passed since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Georgia and Japan. I can state with satisfaction that during this period close ties and exclusive partnerships between the two nations have developed. The government of Japan plays an invaluable role in the development process of our country.

I will spare no effort to intensify the friendship between Georgian and Japanese people, to broaden areas of collaboration, to achieve a higher level of economic cooperation and strategic partnership between our countries to promote a better future and a peaceful 21st Century.

Congratulations on the Independence Day of Georgia



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Georgia
on Their 23rd Independence Day
and the 22nd Anniversary
of
Georgia-Japan
Diplomatic Relations



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