

Croatia national day

Celebrating friendly and beneficial bilateral relations

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AMBASSADOR OF CROATIA

Today, as the Republic of Croatia celebrates the 23rd anniversary of its independence, I would like to use this opportunity to express, on behalf of H.E. Ivo Josipovic, the president of the Republic of Croatia, as well as the government and the people of the Republic of Croatia,



our most sincere wishes for continued peace, prosperity and joy to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and to the government and great and friendly citizens of Japan.

Today's celebration of the Statehood Day of Croatia comes only a few days prior to the marking of the first anniversary of Croatia's membership in the European Union on July 1st. From now on these two dates will always be viewed as two of the most important milestones in the life of Croatia as a sovereign, independent state.

The birth of Croatia was internationally recognized during the wars that devastated the western Balkans in the 1990s, through the formal recognition by the United Nations as early as 1992. About a decade later, being also deeply aware of its European identity, Croatia opened the process of accession to the European Union with a view to becoming a member state. Its accession process lasted longer and was stricter with respect to the enlargement procedures than for any other country that had previously joined. However, with its successful completion, Croatia



Situated in northern Croatia, Trakoscan is one of the most popular castles of the medieval and early modern periods. HTZ CROATIA

further strengthened its international position — both within the European region itself as well as globally.

Viewed from the economic perspective, access to the EU's single market gives enormous possibilities for a nation that makes up only 0.9 % of the total EU population. More importantly, access to the European

funds means Croatia can withdraw over €10 billion euros for projects to be financed in the current EU program period of 2014-2020. This is why the current Croatian government has been for the past couple of years fully focused on creating, together with the private sector, viable small-, mid-sized and nation-wide, strategic

projects in the areas of energy infrastructure, tourism, automotive, pharmaceuticals, ICT, food processing, metals, textiles and others. To support the growing business activity in the country, as well as to make Croatia a more prominent spot on the EU's investment map, Croatian legislative framework has recently been boosted with

a number of key laws and regulations, including those on strategic investment projects and on investment incentives, and the improvement of the overall business climate in the country.

I am particularly pleased to say such developments have inspired interest within the business community of Japan as well. We are witnessing an increased awareness on the part of the Japanese private sector over the current state of affairs of Croatia, and many indicators are suggesting that this interest will only continue to grow. Bilateral economic and political relations between Japan and Croatia have been further advanced by several high level visits during the past year or so, such as the visit to Japan by the Croatian minister of the economy, or the visit to Croatia by Their Imperial Highnesses Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko, as well as two visits by Japanese parliamentary senior vice ministers for foreign affairs.

The tradition of strong tourism, sports, cultural and people-to-people exchanges has been the main driving force and the foundation of warm and friendly relations existing between Japanese and Croatian societies. Today, it is interesting to see how this solid underpinning is starting to get further developed through in-

tensified business and economic cooperation. In terms of the overall deepening of the bilateral ties between Japan and Croatia, I hope the year

ahead of us will prove to be as exciting as the one behind us and that this positive trend will continue in the future, to the mutual benefit of both nations.

Congratulations on the Occasion of the Statehood Day of the Republic of Croatia

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