

Slovakia constitution day

Sharing values, deepening our partnership

Drahomír Štos
AMBASSADOR OF SLOVAKIA

On Sept. 1, Slovakia celebrates its Constitution Day, marking the strong willingness of the Slovak people to base their statehood on democratic principles and the rule of law. On that day in 1992, the modern constitution designed for the emerging new independent state was adopted by the Slovak National Council. This step paved the way for Slovakia to become an independent member of the international community Jan. 1, 1993.

All that happened as a part of the struggle for democracy after the fall of communist governments in Central Europe in 1989. That period was remarkable for the efforts of people to rebuild their societies and economies long hampered by communist ideology, and totalitarian states. The Japanese government and people, together with other friendly countries, made it all easier through providing development assistance and support, as well as through numerous friendly and heartfelt people-to-people ties. Thus I feel greatly honored to extend upon today's occasion, and on behalf of President



Ivan Gašparovič, the government and people of Slovakia, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the government and people of Japan.

Today, having in mind that independence means in particular responsibility, Slovakia as a reliable and cooperative partner makes its contribution to the international community in security, as well as in the economic and development sphere. On a bilateral basis and through its membership in the European Union and NATO, it actively participates in providing security in the Balkans or in Afghanistan. We deeply understand the challenge Japan is facing with regard to developments in North Korea. Slovak development aid is well received in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and other Asian and African countries.

The economy of Slovakia is generally on steady development pace and the business climate is widely considered as friendly to foreign investors. Among the main industries, we count the automotive, electronics, petrochemical and chemical sectors. As an open economy we favor free trade and in this regard we cooperate with like-minded countries at interna-

tional forums, namely, the World Trade Organization. The flow of FDI comes mostly from OECD countries with representation of all developed regions — Europe, North America and Asia. In 2008, the economy, as measured by GDP, grew 6.4 percent, which marks the second-fastest growing economy within the EU. Investors appreciate the transparent and safe environment within the borders of the EU facilitated further by Slovakia's geographical location in the heart of Europe, adoption of the single European currency, the euro, and membership in the Schengen visa system.

Considering Slovakia's export-oriented economy, the global economic downturn obviously poses a challenge. There is a prediction for negative growth of around 5 percent for this year. Fundamentally sound financial institutions did not suffer from the turmoil in international financial markets, but the growth of the Slovak economy depends on developments in international and European markets. The adoption of the euro Jan. 1, 2009, apart from making the business environment even more friendly and transparent, proved a stabilizing and supportive factor in facing recession, too.

Like many other adminis-

trations, the Slovak government has responded proactively to manage the recession, aiming at retaining jobs and assistance to businesses. Signals that the worst is over and world markets are showing signs of recovery are being felt in Slovakia. Among others, Japanese manufacturing operations in Slovakia are recording modest rebounds in European markets. This opens hopefully a new chapter of economic development based on sustainability, research and development, and new technologies.

Bilateral relations between Slovakia and Japan are firmly rooted in common values, and based on mutual friendship and respect. Our two countries support development strategies in which social responsibility remains essential. In parallel with bilateral relations, Slovakia supports the deepening partnership between the EU and Japan in all fields. Together we facilitate greater understanding, and a closer partnership between Europe and Asia through the interregional process of cooperation, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Slovakia values greatly Japanese input in the activities of the OECD, notably in the flow of investment portfolios, and looks forward to hosting the annual OECD

Foreign Ministers Meeting next year.

Excellent collaboration on peace and security issues when our countries hold a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council is just further proof of our many shared visions and attitudes. Slovakia supports Japan's bid to become a permanent member of a reformed UNSC. Japan's efforts to secure peace and stability around the world are highly appreciated and encouraged. Slovakia is ready to cooperate with Japan in development assistance to regions such as the Balkans, Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Within the framework of our economic cooperation, trade may slow slightly because of the effects of the global recession. Trade turnover reached 814 million euros in 2008, covering a wide range of mostly industrial commodities. With 97 million euros, Japan was Slovakia's second-largest export market in Asia.

The favorable and transparent investment environment attracted up to 20 Japanese companies to place their production units in Slovakia. Today, brand names such as Sony and Panasonic are manufacturing here their products for European markets, including Russia. Yazaki Corp. as a major supplier for the automotive industry is maintaining its operations despite the hard times



Inspirational landmark: The Danube runs through Slovakia's capital Bratislava. EMBASSY OF SLOVAKIA

the sector is experiencing.

In general, all Japanese investors are regarded highly for their constructive cooperation with local and central authorities, as well as being socially responsible partners.

The overall high satisfaction with manufacturing operations allows us to make advances in research and development cooperation. This move is supported by the Slovak government and widely seen as a road to the prospective future of the Slovakia-Japan economic relationship.

Slovakia is becoming more and more well known to Japanese travelers. The combination of a rich cultural heritage,

which brings together elements of various European traditions, living folk culture, vibrant city life, famous spa resorts and the beauty of its nature underlined by traditional Slovak hospitality, make Slovakia a sought-after holiday destination.

Rich cultural interaction provides for strong bonds between art-loving communities and contributes greatly to mutual understanding. Classical music, children's book illustrations, martial arts, Japanese traditional drum music, puppet theater and films continue to be important means of mutually enhancing cultural communication.

I should also like to send a special greeting to all Slovak nationals here in Japan, and to express my acknowledgment

for their continued support to the Slovak Embassy and for the role that they play, particularly in the cultural sphere, in further enhancing bilateral relations between Slovakia and Japan. My sincere appreciation also goes to all the Japanese agencies and companies that are actively engaged with Slovakia.

It is with satisfaction to note that Slovaks and Japanese are deeply committed to further developing their young but strong relationship, looking ahead to the future. I wish to express once again the sincere gratitude of the Slovak people to the Japanese people for their friendship and support. Our friendship is built on common values, thus allowing us to enjoy good times and weather bad times.

Congratulations
to the People of
the Slovak Republic
on Their Constitution Day

Quality Steel · Machinery

SINCE 1907

JSW
THE JAPAN STEEL WORKS, LTD.

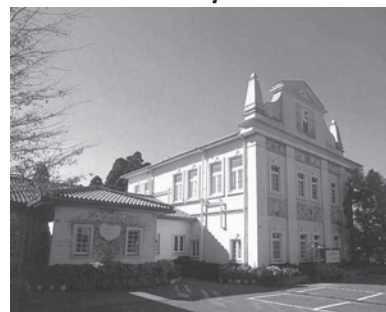
Gate City Ohsaki-West Tower, 11-1, Osaki 1-chome,
Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 141-0032, Japan
Phone: 03-5745-2001 Fax: 03-5745-2025

<http://www.jsw.co.jp/>



Congratulations
to the People
of the Slovak Republic
on their
Constitution Day

Honorary Consulate of the Slovak Republic in Kirishima
Masahiro Yamamoto
Honorary Consul



BARREL VALLEY PRAHA & GEN

KIRISHIMA HIGHLAND BREWERY LTD
876-15, Fumoto, Mizobecho, Kirishimashi, Kagoshima 899-6404
TEL 0995-58-4868 FAX 0995-58-3621 <http://www.praha-gen.com/>

Congratulations
to the People
of the Slovak Republic
on their
Constitution Day

YAZAKI

YAZAKI CORPORATION: World Headquarters, Y-City
1500 Mishuku, Susono City, Shizuoka Prefecture,
410-1194, Japan
Phone: 055-965-3002

Yazaki Slovakia spol. s r.o.
Lehotska Cesta 2
97180 Prievidza SLOVAKIA

Yazaki Wiring Technologies Slovakia s.r.o.
Uzhorodska
6080/35A
07101 Michalovce SLOVAKIA