

Portugal national day

Old friends look forward to deepening relationship

José de Freitas Ferraz
AMBASSADOR OF PORTUGAL

Let me reiterate Portugal's deepest condolences and express once again our firm solidarity to the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake and their families.



Having arrived in Japan at the end of February, I will celebrate today for the first time in your country Portugal's National Day.

It is known that the links between Japan and Portugal go way back to 1543. Last year we commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Trade signed between King D. Pedro V and the Emperor Komei, which marked the re-establishment of the old diplomatic ties between our two nations.

Having in mind the ongoing negotiating process to achieve an Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and the European Union, I consider the deepening of the commercial and economic ties between Portugal and Japan as a priority

of our long relationship.

It is important to augment the flux of trade, investment and tourism between the two countries. It is also relevant to increase the cooperation on the field of alternative energies and energy efficiency. In 2010, renewable energy was the source for 43 percent of Portugal's electricity generation. Since more than 10 years ago, we have been promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, seeking to upgrade the competitiveness of the Portuguese economy while preserving the environment and reducing emissions.

This summer Portugal will inaugurate its nationwide electric vehicle charging network, which includes 1,500 normal and 50 fast charging stations in 25 towns and cities across the country. Our capital, Lisbon, will have more than 600 of those stations. In this field we count on the collaboration of the Nissan-Renault Alliance, which already started building a factory in northern Portugal to produce advanced lithium-ion batteries to be used in electric vehicles. This factory will start to manufacture 50,000 batteries per year, starting in

2012, and we anticipate that in 2025, 10 percent of the cars circulating on Portuguese roads will be electric.

The ties between our two countries were forged in history, but today they must focus the future. That is why both countries promote the mobility of students between its universities and we also witnessed a growing interest in the number of exchanges and collaborations among research centers in many different areas.

With an €800 million endowment from a Portuguese industrialist, the Champalimaud Foundation was inaugurated

last year in Lisbon. It is a Portuguese private institution that is already working at the cutting edge of neuroscience research, cancer research and clinical practice. The Japanese Nobel laureate Susumu Tonegawa is a member of the Foundation Scientific Committee, which includes other outstanding scientists from different countries, and the foundation is now recruiting researchers and physicians from all over the world.

The bilateral history of the relationship between Japan and Portugal is now more than 450 years old. We take pride in being Japan's oldest friend in the

Western world, and that is the reason why one must strive to look ahead and further deepen this unique relationship.

On the occasion of the Portuguese National Day, I want to express my firm commitment to the strengthening of the friendship with Japan in the upcoming years. I want also once again to remember and honor the many thousands of Japanese who lost their lives in the earthquake and tsunami, and convey my certainty that, as in the past, this great country and its resilient people will overcome the adversity sooner than anyone can predict.



Historic: Present-day Praça do Comercio (Commerce Square) in Lisbon was known as the palace grounds since it was the site of the king's residence until the royal Ribeira Palace there was destroyed by an earthquake in 1755. EMBASSY OF PORTUGAL



Landmark: The Pena National Palace, which stands above the town of Sintra near Lisbon, is a national monument and a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF PORTUGAL

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phone: 03-3403-4411 fax: 03-3479-0609

14-4, Roppongi 7-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan