

Kosovo national day

Kosovo remains keen on deepening ties with Japan

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AMBASSADOR OF KOSOVO

I am grateful to The Japan Times for the opportunity to address its readers with a message on the day of the fourth anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. On this historical day we remember the difficulties



and sacrifices the people went through, until the legitimate representatives of the country declared independence. The future generations shall remember Feb. 17 as the day when the long dream for peace, freedom and democracy for an independent Republic of Kosovo with equal constitutional rights for all its citizens, regardless of ethnicity or religion, materialized.

On this day it is also important to reflect on the developments of the new democracy. After almost

nine years of U.N. administration that helped reconstruct the country, secure peace and stability, the people of Kosovo took over the responsibility to continue the process of state- and nation-building. This transition period could to some extent be compared with the Meiji Restoration. The highly motivated government and the people are striving to develop and catch up with their neighboring and other European countries.

While many challenges still remain, the country has made considerable progress in efforts to reform the public administration, bolster the legal system, and to bring the legislation into line with European standards. Backed by the European Union-led Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), institutions are working hard to tackle corruption and organized crime. The progress of the new state was also acknowledged by the International Steering Group for Kosovo (ISG) and



President of the Republic of Kosovo Atifete Jahjaga

we are proud that the ISG announced plans to end the “supervised independence,” thus making Kosovo a normal, fully European state that aspires to become a member of the EU.

Today Kosovo is on the right path. With the unreserved support and guidance from our friends and partners, including



Kosovo for Japan: A memorial concert is held in the capital Pristina on June 28 in honor of the victims of the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake. EMBASSY OF KOSOVO

Japan, Kosovo is cementing its statehood and finding its place in the community of nations. The economic development of the country is of high priority; by strengthening the financial system, investing in infrastructure, education and in our youth as the greatest asset, we shall prepare the country for future chal-

lenges. There are many opportunities out there for Japanese investors who enjoy high reputation among Kosovars — in fields like mining, energy, information and communications technology, and tourism.

Kosovo may still not be that well known to the public in Japan, but the Japanese state ad-

ministration and non-governmental organizations have made substantial contributions to the reconstruction and development of the country since 1999. Last year Japan faced one of the toughest crises in its history. The people of Kosovo expressed their solidarity and sympathy with the Japanese people in those very difficult moments.

On the occasion of a memorial concert held in honor of the victims of the earthquake and tsunami of March 11, our President Atifete Jahjaga stated: “We are here to express our solidarity and to share the pain with the Japanese people and the government of this friendly state, and to find the courage and strength to deal with consequences as soon as possible. The people of Kosovo highly appreciate friendship and solidarity as they themselves went through difficult moments, and we especially remember with deep gratitude the support of Japan for the state of Kosovo, for the reconstruction, democracy and development of our country.”

One interesting moment that touched the hearts of all people

in Kosovo and will always be remembered is when, only two weeks after the disaster, Japanese Ambassador to Kosovo Shigeo Iwatani visited Kosovo to sign an agreement for a grant that should improve the quality of life in the two biggest cities, Pristina and Prizren.

“Even in these difficult times we are determined to continue with this project. We hope that you will remember that Japan never breaks its promises,” Ambassador Iwatani said, expressing the determination of the Japanese institutions to support the development of Kosovo.

Kosovo is keen on strengthening the cooperation between the two countries. You can see that the ties are livening up in the official visits of Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj and Minister of Environment Dardan Gashi to Tokyo last December. We look forward to welcoming Japanese officials in Kosovo very soon, too.

Lastly, I invite you all to visit and explore the newborn Kosovo: a cultural crossroads known for its ancient, medieval and Ottoman monuments, rich on tradition, with beautiful landscape, exquisite food, friendly cities and hospitality.

Congratulations
on the Fourth Anniversary of the Independence
of the Republic of Kosovo

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