

Georgia national day

Rapid progress in business climate a result of reforms

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AMBASSADOR OF GEORGIA

On behalf of the government and people of Georgia, and that of my own, on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the restoration of the independence of Georgia, allow me to extend my cordial greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the government and friendly people of Japan. It is my pleasure to convey the congratulations on the National Day of our country to the small Georgian community all around Japan.

Twenty years have passed from the establishment of diplomatic relations between Georgia and Japan, and I can state with a sense of satisfaction that during this period important steps were made toward the strengthening of relations between our countries and the development of our cooperation in international organizations. The help and support from the people and government of Japan in the process of the development of our country is invaluable for Georgia. With deepest gratitude, I would like to mention the great political and economic support, that Japan rendered to Georgia during the difficult period of my country.

Russia's large-scale military aggression in 2008 was followed by the occupying of Georgian villages and illegal recognition of the so-called independence of undivided territories of Georgia: Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. Despite numerous calls from the international community that Russia is in breach of the six-point ceasefire agreement of Aug. 12, 2008, the occupation of Georgian territories by the Russian armed forces continues.

Despite the above-mentioned



Seaside city: Batumi on the Black Sea is a large commercial center and summer resort area. EMBASSY OF GEORGIA

challenges, the recent years of Georgian history will be remembered as an era of creating a society built on the rule of law, that respects the rights of individuals and fundamental reforms, leading to the vision of Georgia with democratic roots and values. Besides achieving the full de-occupation of 20 percent of the territories of Georgia — Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia — the main foreign policy priorities for my country are the establishment of truly democratic institutions and valuable integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

For Georgia's democratic transformation, several key reforms were implemented since the peaceful Rose Revolution in November 2003 — including the decisive fight against corruption, reduction of institutional bureaucracy, the simplification of licensing, the liberalization of the economy, strengthening of property and contract rights — have resulted in quick economic growth with a 7 percent gross domestic product (GDP) index in 2011.

As a result of the reforms the

improving its business climate has been well-documented in a number of international indexes: the World Bank named Georgia as the top reformer among 174 countries for five years, while the World Bank/IFC 2012 Doing Business report placed Georgia in 16th place in the world in terms of ease of doing business. The country holds 29th place in the Heritage Foundation's index of economic freedom, out of 183 economies, and Forbes' Best Countries for Business 2011 ranks Georgia in 50th place among 134 countries. The 2011 EBRD survey on countries in transition singles out Georgia as the most successful country in the region (Eastern Europe and Caucasus) in terms of institution building, on par with Baltic States. According to Transparency International, Georgia is the top country in the post-Soviet Union region in terms of fighting corruption.

In recent years, the tourism industry is booming in Georgia. Last year, around 3 million tourists visited Georgia from different regions of the world. We express hope that the number of Japanese visitors to Georgia will increase significantly in the near future.

The government of Georgia gives an utmost importance to the establishment of active and broad relations with Japan in various fields of cooperation. The 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic rela-

tions between Georgia and Japan will be celebrated with several cultural events during 2012 and will emphasize the already existing, strong cultural ties of our two nations. The Japanese performances of prima ballerina Nino Ananiashvili with the State Ballet of Georgia and concert tours of well-known Georgian pianist Khatia Buniatishvili represent perfect examples of enhancing the cultural relations and at the same time making 2012 outstanding and impressive.

I firmly believe that the friendly relations enjoyed by our countries will be further developed and enriched in the coming years to the benefit of our nations. I am confident that productive cooperation be-



Capital: Old Tbilisi with the St. Mary Metekhi Church and typical balconies are seen against the backdrop of the modern Tbilisi TV Broadcasting Tower. EMBASSY OF GEORGIA

tween our two states, based on the principles of mutual respect, friendship and equality, will con-

tinuously deepen in the interests of both countries. I take this opportunity to wish

the people of Japan and the entire country peace, welfare and prosperity.

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Congratulations to the people of Georgia on Their 21st Independence Day and the 20th Anniversary of Georgia-Japan Diplomatic Relations

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