

Romanian national day

Special year allows strengthening of bilateral relations

Radu Serban
AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA

Every year on Dec. 1, Romanians everywhere celebrate the Great Union and the birth of the modern Romanian state. This day marks the 1918 union of the provinces of Transylvania, Banat, Bessarabia and Bukovina with the Romanian Kingdom (1859-1918; consisted of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia). We celebrate the determination of past generations to seek a better life, together, in a unitary state.

I was privileged to be appointed ambassador of Romania to the beautiful Land of the Rising Sun at a time when the bilateral rela-



tions are undergoing a considerable improvement in the framework of the European Union-Japan strategic partnership.

I arrived in Japan in March, and on April 23 I had the honor to present my letters of credential to His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito. During my assignment here, I will do my utmost to meet the expectations of both Romanians and Japanese and to explore possible new dimensions of our bilateral ties.

2012 has a special significance for both Romania and Japan as we celebrate six major events. First, there is the 110th anniversary since the establishment of the first diplomatic contacts between Romania and Japan. Second, the 10th anniversary since the signing of a joint partnership agreement is another reason to rejoice. Third, there is the 35th

anniversary since Constanta and Yokohama became sister cities.

Then, we have the 20th anniversary since Brasov and Musashino began cultural exchanges. Moreover, a twinning agreement was signed in Romania this September between the cities of Sibiu and Hida Takayama. Last but not least, 2012 marks the 140th anniversary since the first Romanian missionary, Anatolie Tihai, came to Japan to teach about Christianity.

Such solid benchmarks make it possible for us to continue to strengthen the friendly bilateral ties that so happily exist between our countries.

My first visit out of Tokyo was to Fukushima, in order to express the compassion, the solidarity and admiration of the Romanian people for the resilience and tenacity of the Japanese in

the face of the adversities of nature after the triple tragedy of March 11, 2011.

The 35th anniversary since Constanta and Yokohama became sister cities provided me with the opportunity to meet with the mayor of Yokohama, Fumiko Hayashi, several times. Together, we agreed to pursue new ways of developing the friendly relations between our countries, especially in the economic field.

I was honored to represent my country at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony on Aug. 6, and to advocate Romania's determination to secure a better future for our children, through the implementation of the goals set forth in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

Recently, I had the opportunity to travel to Okinawa where I

met the Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, and discussed potential business projects as well as people-to-people exchanges, with a special emphasis on geriatrics.

Also in 2012, several officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, including two state secretaries, visited Japan for political consultations and exchange of experience. A Romanian delegation also attended the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, which took place in July. The governor of the National Bank led the Romanian delegation that attended the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group in Tokyo.

Romania and Japan have a long tradition of cooperating in the economic field to the satisfaction of both parties. A flagship project from an economic point of view is the subway line connecting Bucharest International Airport with the central railway station in the capital. It will be built with a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) loan and one of the stations will be named Tokyo, as an expression of gratitude for the Japanese contribution to this project.

An economic seminar organized by the embassy this October to attract Japanese investments to Romania was well-received by local companies and we hope to see its first results in the near future.

Moreover, consultations with the current Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Yuichiro Hata are paving the way for a fruitful collaboration in terms of transportation and tourism.

Cultural exchanges are flourishing thanks to the efforts of the Japan-Romania friendship associations whose activities cover music, the visual arts, handicrafts and sculpture. Throughout the year, the embassy organized cultural workshops, different exhibitions and classical music concerts. As part of the events celebrating the birth of the EU, a Romanian diplomat traveled to the south of Japan to speak to high school students about the



Good ties: Ambassador of Romania Radu Serban meets with Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Yuichiro Hata in the ministry's building in Tokyo on Aug. 2. EMBASSY OF ROMANIA

EU and its member states.

Also, from an academic perspective, we initiated talks between the Bucharest University of Economic Studies and the University of Fukushima. A scholarship fund was established and we hope that two Japanese students will go to Romania next year to study economics.

Romanians are becoming more and more interested in Japanese culture. According to official figures, about 2,500 Romanians are currently learning Japanese. Haiku is also gaining a lot of attention among young and old generations alike.

Such a busy agenda as ours in this anniversary year sends a clear message that Romania is committed to further developing the friendly relations between and contributing to the prosperity of our two countries.

As ambassador of Romania to Japan, I would like to extend an invitation to the Japanese people to visit and invest in the future of Romania, this fascinating country that borders the Danube River and the Black Sea and boasts one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in Europe, the Carpathians.



Welcome site: Vornet Monastery is in the north of the country. EMBASSY OF ROMANIA



Wonderful sight: The Statue of King Decebalus rises alongside the Danube River in southwest Romania. EMBASSY OF ROMANIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE
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FOR PROGRESS, HAPPINESS
AND PROSPERITY TO ALL
ROMANIAN PEOPLE.

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on the Occasion
of
Their National Day

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