

Russia national day

Neighbors and natural partners

On the results of the Russian-Japanese summit and prospects for bilateral relations

Evgeny Afanasiev
AMBASSADOR OF RUSSIA

First of all I would like to offer a warm welcome to all our readers and to congratulate everyone on the occasion of our national holiday — Russia Day. The Declaration on State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation was adopted on June 12, 1990, and the day was officially made a national holiday in 1992. Later, there were proposals to rename the holiday "Russia Day" and in 2002 this was adopted as the official name of the holiday.

This year, Russia Day in Japan is celebrated in the positive atmosphere created by good bilateral relations between our two countries. For the first time in 10 years, the prime minister of Japan has made an official visit to Russia. During his visit, Prime



Minister Shinzo Abe held talks with President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, and I would like to share my impressions of the visit.

As Russian President Putin noted during the visit, Japan is our neighbor and a natural partner. Russian-Japanese cooperation is making dynamic progress, based on the principles of shared trust and mutual benefit.

For the first time in many years, a joint statement by the leaders of the two countries, covering a wide range of bilateral and international issues was agreed upon as a result of the negotiations. In fact, as of today, this statement reflects a thoroughly revised balance of interests for Russia and Japan concerning the most important aspects of our bilateral and international cooperation.

Mutually acceptable wording was reached after several meetings of experts and foreign ministers meeting in London, as well as talks in Moscow and To-

kyo. It is obvious from the text of the joint statement that progress has been made in such complex issues as the dialogue aimed at concluding a peace treaty. The two leaders instructed their foreign ministries to intensify their contacts and develop a mutually acceptable solution to the problem.

It was also agreed to intensify contacts at the upper and top-most levels, within the framework of the foreign ministries and other departments of the two countries. A new format for the contacts — "two plus two" — the foreign ministers and defense ministers of the two countries, was introduced, and Prime Minister Abe extended an invitation to President Putin to make an official visit to Japan in 2014.

The extremely intense economic agenda proved to be a fundamentally new and very positive element of the summit. Special attention was paid to the discussion of specific bilateral cooperation projects de-

signed to become the engines of Russian-Japanese business relations. Following the meeting, eight memorandums on the expansion of Russian-Japanese cooperation were signed — in the fields of transport and energy; on the exchange of financial intelligence data on money laundering and financing of terrorism; between the companies Rosneft and Mitsui & Co. Ltd.; on the creation of a Russian-Japanese investment platform between a Russian private equity fund, the state corporation Vnesheconombank, and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation; between Vnesheconombank and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation; on cooperation between the Russian Agency for Export Credit and Investment Insurance (EXIAR) and the Nippon Export and Investment Insurance (NEXI); and between the government of the Amur region of the Russian Federation and The Hokkaido Bank, Ltd. A number of documents

were signed on the sidelines of the Russian-Japanese summit, and after the visit within the framework of contacts between Russian and Japanese business representatives.

The deepening of financial and economic relations and increased interaction aimed at improving Russia's transport infrastructure as well as energy and agriculture sectors are all designed to complement traditionally successful development cooperation between Russian and Japanese businesses in the energy sector. Both sides also confirmed the availability of promising opportunities for Japanese businesses to take part in projects in such fields as the creation of high-tech industries, medicine, urban renewal and energy conservation, based on advanced Russian and Japanese technologies.

During the Russian-Japanese summit, projects for the joint establishment of facilities for the extraction of hydrocarbons



Summit meeting: President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin meets with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on April 29 in Moscow. EMBASSY OF RUSSIA

and liquefied natural gas (LNG) production near Vladivostok, on Sakhalin, on Yamal island and on the Russian continental shelf, as well as in the petrochemical industry, stood out as priorities for the near future. It was emphasized that significant expansion of the presence of Japanese auto manufacturers in the Russian market had notably contributed to the development of the Russian economy.

In 2012, trade between Russia and Japan rose by almost 13 percent, to a record \$33.5 billion. Japan accounts for about 3.6 percent of Russia's foreign trade and ranks ninth among Russia's trading partners. Russia, in turn, is Japan's 14th biggest trading partner. In my view, these figures are an eloquent testament to what has been achieved so far as well as the impressive untapped potential that exists for cooperation between our two countries. I hope that further reciprocal steps taken by Japanese and Russian businessmen will contribute to the development of large-scale business partnerships between

our two countries.

After the meeting between President Putin and Prime Minister Abe, an Intergovernmental Agreement on the Establishment and Operation of Cultural Centers was signed, which is an important step in the development of private diplomacy as well as cultural and humanitarian exchange.

Incidentally, the eighth Annual Festival of Russian Culture in Japan opened a few days ago. This festival provides an opportunity for members of the Japanese public to further their acquaintance with Russia's leading performers and learn of the latest achievements by Russian artists, in the fields of cinema

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Technology and resources: Completed in 2012, the Ruskly Bridge (left) spans the Eastern Bosphorus, connecting Ruskly Island to mainland Vladivostok. Above: The tanker Cygnus Passage at the terminal for the shipment of gas at the first Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant (project Sakhalin-2) in Prigorodnoye of Sakhalin Island. EMBASSY OF RUSSIA

Japan-Russia bilateral relationship has the most potential to develop

Yoshiro Mori
FORMER PRIME MINISTER



May I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the people of Russia on the occasion of Russia Day. Since June 12, 1990, the day of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Japan and Russia have shared the values of freedom and democracy. Our bilateral relations have developed in many fields.

I retired from politics last November, but will continue to promote friendship between the two countries as the honorary chairman of the Japan-Russia Parliamentarians' Friendship League. I visited Russia as a special envoy sent by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in February and met an old friend of mine, Russian President Vladimir Putin. We exchanged opinions on various bilateral and international issues.

In April, Prime Minister Abe paid an official visit to Russia, the first such visit by a Japanese prime minister in 10 years. He spoke frankly with President Putin about wide-ranging subjects and building a personal, trust-based relation between them. The two adopted the Joint Statement on the Development of Japanese-Russo Partnership, in which the two countries pledged bilateral cooperation in various matters.

On the negotiation of a peace treaty, the two leaders agreed to resume it and accelerate the process. This is very significant. Also, the fact that the agreement was reached from discussions between the two leaders is very significant. I am glad the prime minister's visit to Russia paved the way to better and long-lasting bilateral relations.

On the economic front, the trading volume between the two countries has climbed to a record level and is surely increasing. Japan's direct investment into Russia has also become active. Mutually beneficial relations in trade and economy have reached a new phase.

On culture and sports as well, bilateral cooperation is increasing. There are regular events such as Russian cultural festivals in Japan and Japanese spring and autumn festivals in Russia. It has also been decided that next year is to be Japan-Russia Budo Exchange Year. Envoys of Nippon Budokan event hall are planning to visit Moscow at the end of this year.

The Winter Olympic Games will be held in Sochi, Russia, in just over half a year with high expectations from the world. Also, Moscow will host the Rugby World Cup Sevens, the international tournament for seven-man rugby, at the end of this month. I will attend it as the chairman of the Japan Rugby Football Union. I am looking forward to visiting Russia again.

While the importance of the Asia Pacific region is increasing, Japanese-Russo relations are one of those with the most potential to develop. I hope the two countries will continue to collaborate further as partners.

Finally, may I once again offer the people of Russia my sincere congratulations on the occasion of Russia Day, and pray for Russia's peace and prosperity.

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of
Their National Day



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Russia national day



New age: A view of the Moscow International Business Center (MIBC) with its modern skyscrapers. EMBASSY OF RUSSIA

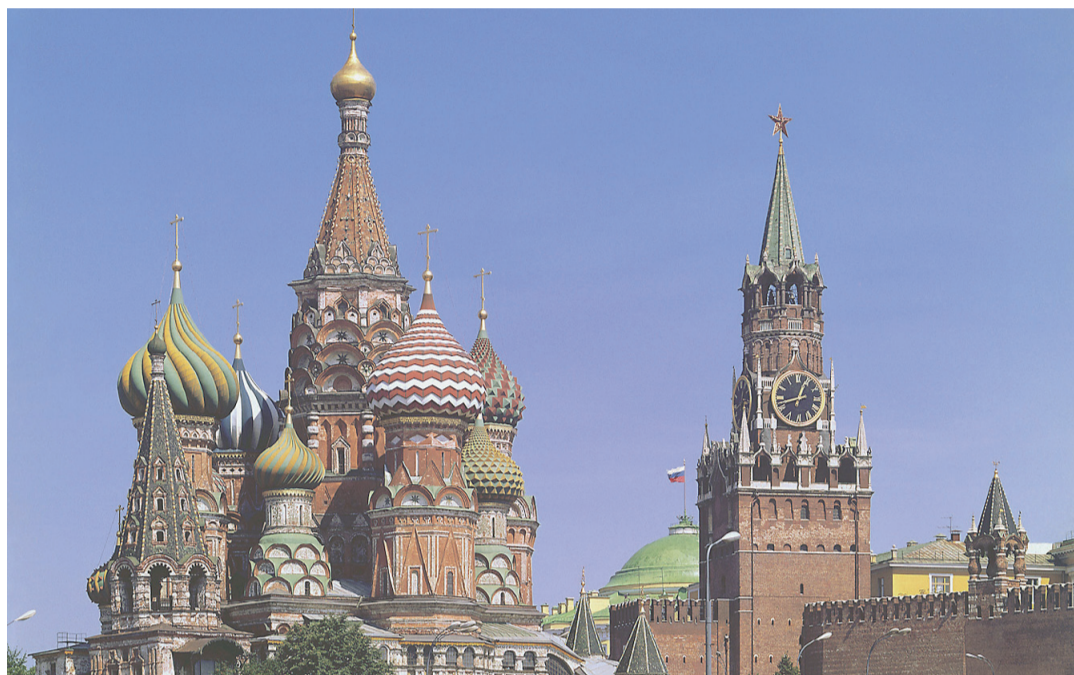
Stronger ties

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and the visual arts.

During the summit in Moscow, Russian and Japanese leaders declared 2014 the Year of Russian-Japanese Exchange in the Field of Martial Arts and this will undoubtedly contribute to the development of bilateral ties in sports. Already this year, in July, the 27th Summer Universiade will be held in Kazan, the capital city of the Republic of Tatarstan, and in October the second World Martial Arts Games will take place in St. Petersburg. In February 2014, the Winter Olympics will be held in Sochi. All these are major international sporting events in which the Japanese will also be competing.

In the near future, a bilateral Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for cultural, scientific and artistic representatives of the two countries will come into effect. In order to further intensify exchange between Russia and Japan, the Russian side has proposed to its Japanese partners to explore the possibility of waiving the visa requirement for short-term visits.

In 2012, approximately 45,000 Japanese tourists visited Russia, and about 50,000 Russians visited Japan in the same period. In terms of geographic proximity, shared cultural heritage and the unique opportunities avail-



Tradition: Located in Moscow's Red Square, the Cathedral of the Protection of Most Holy Theotokos on the Moat, also known as the Cathedral of St. Vasily the Blessed, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF RUSSIA

able for recreation, both within Russia and within Japan, there is considerable potential for the further development of tourist exchange.

During the summit the most important regional and international issues were also discussed, and it was noted that in a variety of areas both sides held similar or identical positions. This was reflected in the joint statement issued by the leaders of the two countries.

The future of our country is inextricably linked with the Asia-Pacific region and we are interested in developing political, trade, economic, humanitarian and cultural ties with the countries of the region, including Japan. This task has been designated as a priority in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, which was approved by the President Putin on Feb. 12 this year. This is all the more important for the regions of Sibe-

ria and the Russian Far East, and their accelerated development is also a priority for the Russian government.

During the visit of the Japanese prime minister to Russia a very remarkable ceremony took place: Prime Minister Abe planted a "sakura" cherry tree in the Botanical Garden in Moscow. The tree was grown from the sprout of an older tree, planted by his father, the former Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe. This friendly gesture perfectly symbolized current relations between the two neighboring countries, as expressed in the agreement they made at the summit in Moscow, that the strengthening of Russian-Japanese relations is in line with the national interests of both the Russian Federation and Japan and can serve as a the foundation for the development of the strategic partnership both sides seek.

I am confident that the ongoing development of Russian-Japanese cooperation in an entire range of areas will be an important factor in strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation, peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and the world as a whole.


More information can be found on our official website, www.russia-emb.jp.

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* The bank was founded in 1994 as Obibank, in 2011 a 50% stake in it was acquired by our Japanese partner, and it now plans to start internet-banking operations in 3Q 2013 as  YAR-BANK

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