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# Latvia national day

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## Relationship built on trust, understanding

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AMBASSADOR OF LATVIA

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It is a great honor to address the readers of The Japan Times and the people of Japan on the occasion of the 96th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence of Latvia on Nov. 18, 1918.



On behalf of the people of Latvia and the President of Latvia, H.E. Andris Berzins I would like to express our deepest respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, Prime Minister H.E. Shinzo Abe and the people of Japan.

Latvia is one of the greenest countries of the world, favorably located in the middle of Northern Europe at the cross-

roads of historical trading routes connecting Scandinavia, Western Europe and Russia. This helped create the unique multicultural environment for people of various nationalities to live together in Latvia and for centuries the country has been a source of inspiration for a range of famous artists, dancers, singers and composers. Latvia is also one of the geographically closest European countries to Japan and both our nations share similar values and mentalities — we love and respect nature and we are hard-working, patient and attentive to details.

The capital city Riga is listed as the UNESCO World Heritage site, famous for one of the largest collection of fine Art Nouveau architecture in the world. Riga has long been a venue for cultural events on an international scale and, during

2014, as European Capital of Culture, hundreds of special events took place, giving guests of the city unique opportunities to sample the riches of Latvian culture and performing arts, including pearls of music performed by world-renowned Latvian choirs, magnificent operas, modern art performances and art exhibitions.

The relations between Latvia and Japan have developed in a steady manner of mutual trust and understanding for almost a century, but it was the historical visit of Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to Latvia in May 2007, that has given the strongest boost to fortify our cordially vibrant and fruitful relationship.

For the last eight years since the Embassy of Latvia has been established in Japan, we have been blessed with the friend-

ship and eagerness of our Japanese partners to work together toward even closer cooperation between our two countries. Particularly I would like to mention active cooperation between the sister cities of Riga and Kobe, in addition to that between Rujiena and Higashikawa, Hokkaido Prefecture.

Regular visits by high-level officials, increased business exchanges, tourism and grassroots level contacts between our two countries continue to grow. We welcome our Japanese partners, friends and those interested to be even more active in approaching our country.

I would also like to express my gratitude to The Japan Times for giving me the opportunity to publish this article and congratulate all Latvians living in Japan and abroad on this very special day.