

Croatian prime minister's visit

Brief background of Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic

Zoran Milanovic is the youngest (born in 1966) Croatian prime minister since the country gained its independence 25 years ago. He began his career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and his political ascent started in 2007 when he was elected president of the Social Democratic Party, then in opposition. He became the new face of Croatian politics, and his arrival marked a generational shift on the Croatian political scene.



Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia Zoran Milanovic

Today, Milanovic runs the center-left coalition government, formed after the convincing win of the Social Democratic Party coalition in the November 2011 parliamentary elections. It was a period of deep economic crisis in Europe, which also seriously affected Croatia. The nations' expectations from his government were great, and the inherited problems even greater.

However, the first task of the Croatian government was to complete the process of accession into the European Union. In January 2012, a successful referendum was held, and the people voted in favour of membership in the EU. Croatia became a full-fledged member of the EU, and part of the single European market on July 1, 2013.

With its entry into the EU, and its 2009 joining of the NATO alliance, Croatia achieved all its strategic national goals. Following this, the most important goal was, and remains, to consolidate the country as a member of EU, and to lead it out of economic crisis. The prime minister has constantly repeated that we are building a country of order and full respect of the law, regardless of one's name, social or material status, affiliation with political or interest groups, regardless of origin and beliefs.

The order of the state was the fiscalization project; the real-time registration and control of all invoices issued, which the government began in 2012 and has successfully implemented.

Last year, the government succeeded in halting the negative economic trends, and in the first quarter of this year, led Croatia out of recession.

The prime minister continues to emphasize that the government must lead with the reforms that have to be both aligned and balanced with the needs, possibilities and capabilities of the Croatian economy and society. The government aims to ensure long-term, stable recovery and economic growth that will not create additional layering and inequality among citizens.

The goal is for Croatia to be recognized as a knowledge-based society, as well as an attractive and desirable investment destination. In order to achieve this, the government will continue to improve its competitive business and investment environment and further continue to develop and strengthen institutional capacity and cooperation between central and local institutions involved in attracting investment

The government plans that all large infrastructure investments be primarily funded from EU funds, or by private investments. Among the most important are investments in energy. The conditions are in place for Croatia to become an energy hub for Central and Eastern Europe, as Croatia is near realization of large energy projects such as the Plomin Thermal Electric Plant and the LNG terminal on the island of Krk.

Enjoying warm and friendly bilateral relationship

Mira Martinec
AMBASSADOR OF CROATIA

On the occasion of the working visit to Japan of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia Zoran Milanovic, I wish to extend my greetings and pay respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and the people of Japan. After 24 years of Croatia's modern-day history as an independent and sovereign state, and 22 years of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Croatia and Japan, this is the first time a Croatian prime minister is visiting Japan.

Although relatively short from a historical viewpoint, bilateral relations between Japan and Croatia have throughout the years maintained a genuinely warm and friendly character. Within the last decade, our relationship has picked up a stronger momentum, starting with the

people-to-people exchanges mostly through tourism and culture, and continuing on the political and economic fields. Two years ago, the Croatian people were charmed by the visit of Their Imperial Highnesses Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko, while exchanges of visits on the ministerial and vice-ministerial levels have been more and more frequent in recent years.

Today's visit of Prime Minister Milanovic may surely be regarded as a key event in evolution of Croatia-Japan political relations thus far, but also as an announcement of the next phase of bilateral relations, one primarily based on commercial and economic foundations. Indeed, one of the main focuses of the prime minister's meetings in Tokyo will be to discuss and explore ways of enhancing the investment and trade cooperation between Croatia and Japan. Although advances have been made in this field, especially with Japanese companies beginning to recognize the investment potential of the Republic of Croatia in the energy, logistics, food and other

sectors, there is ample room for improvement. I am particularly pleased to mention that the intricate process of the establishment of animal health requirements for the export of fresh meat and meat products from Croatia to Japan is currently in its very last phase, thanks to the great efforts and outstanding collaboration between the Japanese and Croatian authorities.

While such current examples always need to be applauded, it is important to remember that the friendship between Japan and Croatia was forged in the aftermath of the Croatian war for independence during the 1990s, with Japan taking a prominent role in the demining of Croatian territories and other humanitarian activities. Today, Japan and Croatia are nations with

shared views on human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and rule of law, and we are steadily building partnerships in many different sectors and across different levels, be it in the public, private or people-to-people arenas. For these reasons, Japanese people will always be recognized as friends and welcomed wholeheartedly when coming to Croatia.



Zagreb Cathedral in the capital EMBASSY OF CROATIA

Strengthening presence within international community

Sadakazu Tanigaki
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-CROATIA
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP
LEAGUE



I would like to extend my warmest welcome to Croatia's Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic, who is visiting Japan, on behalf of the Japan-Croatia Parliamentary Friendship League.

Two years ago Japan and Croatia marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of

diplomatic relations. In June that year, Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko visited Croatia and spent time with the Croatian people. Through this visit, the friendly and cooperative bilateral relations have become increasingly close, and I believe that Prime Minister Milanovic's visit to Japan will help further develop the relations.

Over the past 22 years, Japan and Croatia strengthened their relationship in various areas, including economy, tourism, culture, art and sports. Especially, the Croatia boom among Japanese tourists is nothing short of eye opening. Among

the popular tourist destinations is Dubrovnik, a World Heritage site known as the pearl of the Adriatic Sea. The number of Japanese tourists, which was less than 300 in 1996, has greatly increased, reaching some 150,000 in recent years.

Since its independence in 1991, Croatia has strengthened its presence in the international community as it overcame numerous difficulties at home and abroad within a short time and realized its accession to the European Union in July, 2013. I expect that Japan and Croatia will further strengthen their cooperative relations on the is-

sues facing the international community.

I am among those who have visited Croatia several times and have been fascinated by the peaceful Croatian people and the country's nature and culture. The Japan-Croatia Parliamentary Friendship League was formed in 1995 aiming to serve as a bridge of the bilateral friendship and has been working on the development of bilateral relations. We continue to make our humble contribution to the further development of the friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries.

Heartiest Welcome
to His Excellency
Zoran Milanović,
Prime Minister of
the Republic of Croatia,
on His Working Visit to Japan



YAZAKI Corporation
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Yazaki Europe Ltd. Zagreb Branch Office

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<http://www.memolead.co.jp>

Memolead Group HQ
1785-10 Koda-go,
Nagayo-cho, Nishisonogi-gun, Nagasaki Pref.
Tel: 095-857-1777

Memolead Tokyo Co.
2-4-27 Kinuta, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo
Tel: 03-3749-1246

Memolead Co.
1-3-14 Otomo-cho, Maebashi, Gunma Pref.
Tel: 027-255-1777

Ceremony Miyazaki Co.
5-1 Aoba-cho, Miyazaki, Miyazaki Pref.
Tel: 0985-26-8611