
Latvia National Day

Strong ties in diplomacy, culture, business

Normans Penke
AMBASSADOR OF LATVIA

It is a great honor to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the 97th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence of Latvia on Nov. 18, 1918.



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

The beginning of the 21st century came with hopes for more prosperity, equality, tolerance and peace in the world. The last few years have seen radical changes to the global security system, which has

been further challenged by violent terrorist attacks in France and the Middle East. I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the families of all those who have lost friends and loved ones.

These tragic events highlighted the fact that peace, freedom and democracy cannot be taken for granted and we need to stay strongly united in fighting for them, especially during the time when some forces wish to sow fear and hatred among people. Now more than ever, it is important for the nations around the world to stay united against the transgressions of international rules and condemn extreme nationalism, homophobia, xenophobia and religious extremism.

Latvia and Japan are like-minded partners, sharing strong diplomatic ties based on common values for democracy and a rule-based international system. Latvia highly values the



Streets of Old Riga PETERIS
VAIVARS

unwavering support of Japan to facilitate peace and stability in the world. This mutual understanding of our partnership to tackle the ever-evolving global challenges our nations face was strongly emphasized and reaffirmed during the official visit of our Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics to Tokyo at the end of October.

We have been blessed with the friendship and eagerness of our Japanese partners to fortify close ties between our two countries. Particularly, I would like to mention active cooperation between sister cities — Riga and Kobe, as well as Rujiena and Higashikawa, Hokkaido. A variety of projects in the fields of business, music, art and design, people-to-people contacts between our two countries have continued to grow, leading to triple the number of Japanese tourists visiting Latvia in 2015, compared with previous years.

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

Lastly, my best wishes for a prosperity and happiness to people of Japan for the years to come.