

Romania National Day

Sharing principles in politics, society and economy

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AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA

Three years from now, Romania will celebrate the Centenary of its Great Unification Day. On Dec. 1, 1918, the National Assembly of Romania in the city of Alba Iulia declared the Unification of Transylvania with Romania. That day marks the foundation of the Romanian state within its present-day boundaries and it has been celebrated as our National Day since 1990, following the fall of the communist regime.

On bilateral ties with Japan, another centenary we are looking forward is 2017, when we will celebrate the royal decree of the king of Romania to send the first minister plenipotentiary of Romania to Japan. This decree was a result of consultations in Vienna in 1902, between diplomats of the two countries seeking to establish diplomatic relations.

Romania's relations with Japan have never been better than today and based on the same fundamental values the prospects are very promising.

Since last December, the new President of Romania Klaus Iohannis, has established a good record of cooperating with Japan. As former



mayor of the city of Sibiu, he signed a twinning agreement with Takayama, Gifu Prefecture in August 2012, after visiting Japan in 2009, under a cooperation program with the city. Iohannis has also met with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in New York, in September.

As a member state of the European Union and NATO, Romania is united with Japan in the shared fundamental values on which our political systems, societies and economies are based. Be it in a bilateral or multilateral framework, Japan and Romania cooperate for a better, peaceful world, free of any coercion, be it external or internal.

The port cities of Constanta and Yokohama have been sister cities for almost 40 years, and two others — Targu Mures and Kumamoto — are undergoing the process of signing twinning agreements. Based on excellent dialogue between Ehime University and Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, the city of Matsuyama is developing friendly relations with the largest town in central Romania. The businesspeople of Matsuyama decided generously to donate 500 cherry saplings to the municipality of Cluj-Napoca, where the Japanese culture is already known through language, haiku, calligraphy and more. Additionally, the longstanding friendly relations between Brasov and

Musashino, Tokyo, are moving toward a twinning agreement.

I am very proud to announce to the readers of The Japan Times that the 2015 Japan Foundation Award went to the Sibiu Theatre Festival, in recognition of their constant contribution to strengthening the cultural ties between our countries. Japanese volunteers are helping, year by year, to organize the festival in Sibiu, while the actors demonstrated their talent in different cities of Japan.

The cultural ties are also reflected in sculpture. Enjoying life in Japan for more than three years, I was happy to discover 13 pieces of art in Japanese museums by the famous Romanian sculptor, Constantin Brancusi, who is very much appreciated and admired by Japanese art admirers. The "Homage to Brancusi," by Isamu Noguchi, in the Yokohama Art Museum, is a testimony of an exceptional friendship between the two great artists. Among the followers of Brancusi, the contemporary Romanian sculptor Dan Istrate won the Grand Prize at Ube Biennale, Yamaguchi prefecture, in 2011.

In sports, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics are a good opportunity to reaffirm the potential of both countries. I hope the symbol of Romanian Olympics, Nadia Comaneci, will visit Japan to promote our country. The rugby teams of Japan and Romania had excel-

lent performances at the last world championship in England, and we wish many successes to Japan in organizing the 2019 edition.

In the economic field, specifically in the automotive sector, I dare to say that we, Romanians and Japanese, are relatives by alliance. It is the famous Renault-Nissan alliance that connects our automotive industries, since the biggest company in Romania, Dacia, belongs to Renault Group. The Japanese car industry is investing in Romania, producing components, such as ball bearings in the city of Alexandria.

On economic exchanges, I hope the two sides will advance in using a Japanese loan, for building the segment of subway between Bucharest and its main airport.

Our bilateral trade is based on a long tradition, with the first Treaty of Commerce and Navigation being signed in 1934. Now we will be part of the new Japan-EU Free Trade Agreement.

Many positive things are happening lately, on a person-to-person level. One year ago, on Dec. 1, a Romanian citizen, Ionut Sandu, was decorated by Akie Abe, the wife of the prime minister, for saving the life of 4 Japanese children. Sandu is one of the almost 2,500 Romanians living in Japan. In 2015, we appointed two new honorary consuls, in Osaka and Shi-

zuoka, to support Romanians in those regions. Some of my compatriots in Japan are demonstrating their abilities in cooking Romanian dishes in different restaurants in Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Matsuyama. To maintain old traditions and culture, we have a Romanian Orthodox Parish in Tokyo and one in Osaka.

My personal experience in the beautiful country of omotenashii, or traditional Japanese hospitality, is full of discoveries. Last July, I climbed to the top of Mount Fuji and impressed by its grandeur, I published a book, titled "Closer to the Sky," in Romanian, Japanese and English. Visiting the village of Gokayama, Toyama Prefecture, I discovered how much our two peoples, during their long history, developed the same skills, for instance in building wooden houses thatched with straw.

Discovering more and more the Japanese culture, I enjoy haiku poetry and I am very honored to be invited by the Haiku International Association to lecture about haiku in Romania. It is quite impressive to see how many Romanians are composing this kind of Japanese short poetry.

Finally, let me disclose my three dreams as ambassador in Japan: a direct passenger flight from Bucharest to Tokyo; a visit by the prime minister to Romania; and annual bilateral trade of \$1 billion.



Clockwise from top left; President Klaus Iohannis shakes hands with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in New York on Sept. 26; Ascension Orthodox Cathedral in Targu Mures; Hunedoara Castle is a Gothic-Renaissance castle. ROMANIAN EMBASSY

Congratulations
to the People
of
Romania
on the Occasion
of
Their National Day

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