

Macedonia National Day

Commitment to strengthening bilateral relations remains strong

Andrijana Cvetkovikj
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA



It gives me a great pleasure on the occasion of Macedonian Independence Day, on behalf of the President of the Republic

of Macedonia Gjorge Ivanov, Prime Minister Emil Dimitriev and the Macedonian people, to express heartfelt regards to their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the government and the people of Japan.

Twenty-five years ago, on Sept. 8, 1991, a referendum for independence took place that confirmed the determination of the Macedonian people to build a future of a free, sovereign and independent Macedonia. The bilateral relations between Macedonia and Japan estab-



Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki (right) shakes hands with his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida at the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo in October. EMBASSY OF MACEDONIA

lished on March 1, 1994, mark an upward development trend in different fields of mutual cooperation. Last year numerous important events were held in both Macedonia and Japan. Among them, I would like to highlight the visit paid by the Macedonian Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki to Japan from Oct. 27 to 29 and his meeting with his Japanese counterpart Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida that reaffirmed the commitment on both sides to further strength-

en bilateral cooperation.

A significant part of his visit was the official opening ceremony of the Macedonian Embassy in Tokyo that took place on Oct. 28 with the presence of the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Miki Yamada, numerous prominent figures of the political and economic areas and representatives of the diplomatic corps in Japan. During the opening ceremony in the ceremonial speech I stressed that the bridge between Macedonia and Japan is half finished and the other half will be completed once Japan opens a resident embassy in Macedonia. The news on the decision of the Japanese government to open an embassy in Skopje came before the end of the year and I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my profound appreciation for this decision. This step should contribute to further strengthening our mutual friendship and open doors for new areas of cooperation.

Even though Macedonia is rarely known in Japan for its economic performance, according to the World Bank's Doing Business 2016 report, Macedonia is ranked 12th out of 189 economies in the world, showing that the country is one of the best-ranked economies in its income category and second in the world in the "starting a business" indicator. Our embassy has put in a great deal of effort to foster cooperation in the economic area by organizing business forums and presentations across Japan. Last year, we had several business delegations visit Macedonia to investigate opportunities for investment, and we already have several companies that are seriously considering expanding their businesses in Macedonia.

As the first Macedonian ambassador to Japan, I'm especially proud of the increased number of Japanese tourists visiting. The Japan Association of Tour Operators (JATA) last year placed the city of Ohri, where one of the oldest and deepest lakes in Europe is located (Ohrid Lake), among the 30 most-beautiful places to visit in Europe. We held a joint seminar for tourism with JATA where we presented the most beautiful places to visit in Macedonia and the competitive cash incentives that our government offers foreign tour operators. As a result, many tour agencies included Macedonia in their travel packages, and from this year there is also Macedonia-exclusive tour offered by a

Japanese company.

The Republic of Macedonia and Japan are also building cooperation in the field of education, especially medical training and specialization. Our embassy signed several memorandums of understanding with Japanese hospitals and has already started training programs.

Let me use this occasion to extend my deep gratitude for the continuous Japanese sup-

port to Macedonia, especially the assistance for tackling the migrant crisis and the emergency relief goods following the flooding disaster that struck Skopje on Aug. 6. The largest natural disaster in the past decade left 22 people dead and more than 100 injured, at the same time causing immense material damage. With this in mind, I would like to invite all of you to express solidarity with Macedonia and donate for the

Macedonian people who were seriously affected by the floods. Humanity, compassion and unconditional love were also lessons that Mother Teresa left as her legacy — a brave woman born in Skopje and beatified as a saint on Sept. 4.

In conclusion, let me express my sincere wishes for peace, happiness and health to all the readers of The Japan Times and

to invite you all to help me build the bridge of friendship between our two countries.

Those wishing to donate to Macedonia (in yen) in the wake of the August flooding disaster can do so through Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Odenmachi Branch, account number 0484289.

Steady progress in key sectors

Masatake Matsuda

HONORARY CONSUL-GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA IN JAPAN

The Republic of Macedonia, the birthplace of Alexander the Great, has a long and ancient history, but only 25 years as an independent state following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. It is a country with vigorous energy for prosperity and international recognition.

The Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia in Japan was officially established in 2013 and in 2014 H.E. Andrijana Cvetkovikj became the first resident ambassador to Japan. She works tirelessly on further improvement of bilateral and economic ties. Recently, we visited Hokkaido Prefecture, where she met with high-level officials, including Hokkaido's governor, Sapporo's deputy mayor, the Sapporo Chamber of Commerce's vice president and Hokkaido University's president, with the purpose of presenting the opportunities for future cooperation.

Such extensive exchanges of visits and meetings have resulted in further strengthening our countries' friendship, which would be even further advanced with the opening of the Japanese Embassy in Skopje early next year.

I'm confident bilateral exchanges, including those between our private sectors and especially in economic exchange and investment, will develop rapidly.



Day of Macedonian Folklore in May EMBASSY OF MACEDONIA

*Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Macedonia
on the Occasion of
the 25th Anniversary of
Their Independence*



Japan-Macedonia Friendship Association

<http://japanmacedonia.com>