

Serbia National Day

Committed to enhancing bilateral ties

Nenad Glisic
AMBASSADOR OF SERBIA

On the auspicious occasion of Serbian Statehood Day — a reminder of the day of Candlemas in 1804 when the first Serbian uprising against Ottoman Turks started and the same date in 1835 when the first modern constitution of Serbia was adopted — I would like to extend my greetings and pay respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and people of Japan. On this important day, I also wish to extend greetings to my fellow Serbians in Japan who, though not numerous, have contributed actively to furthering relations between Serbia and Japan.

This year marks 135 years since the commencement of official communications between Serbia and Japan, initiated by the King of Serbia Milan Obrenovic I and Emperor Meiji. In 1882, the king informed Emperor Meiji about the outcome of the Berlin Congress and the accession of Serbia to the family of European states. Emperor Meiji in reply



expressed his best wishes and readiness to develop friendly relations between the two states. Our two nations and peoples have since had their destinies intertwined during various historical events, and the ties connecting our countries continue today.

The year 2016 has been very difficult and uncertain for Europe and the world, but the stable government in Serbia led by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic nevertheless managed to maintain full stability and peace, while achieving significant economic recovery. Serbia has achieved GDP growth of 2.75 percent in 2016 and the government will be working toward higher than 3 percent economic growth this year. My country has regained its position as the top investment destination in the world, measured by the number of jobs relative to the size of the population.

Many world-renowned companies have recognized our potential and decided to locate their operations in Serbia. For some of them, Serbia serves as a manufacturing hub that enables duty-free exports to a market of 1.1 billion people. Others are attracted by our country's adept level of English proficiency, highly skilled and easily trained workforce and the generous tax and incentive

environment. Regardless of the reason for their initial interest, businesses that decide to set up operations or conduct trade in Serbia encounter a reliable and dynamic country that affords them a much greater opportunity than they initially perceived.

Our government remains strongly committed and focused on pursuing the European Union (EU) accession process. In membership negotiations with the EU, Serbia has to date opened six out of 35 negotiation chapters and this year we will be ready to open 10 more chapters. The preservation of peace and stability is our most important goal for this year, something that is not easy to achieve, especially in a turbulent territory such as the Western Balkans.

The economic, regional and political stability represents a premise for new investments, both international and domestic, and it contributes to build an international image of our country as a reliable partner. Through dialogue, my country will continue the policy of collaboration and of strengthening relations with neighbouring

countries to ensure long-term peace and stability. The issue of Kosovo and Metohija remains the key challenge for Serbia. Our government is committed to do its best to continue the dialogue with Pristina, as this is in the best interest of the whole region, but at the same time it will insist on the full implementation of the Brussels agreement reached under the auspices of the EU.

Since the beginning of the European migrant crisis, Serbia has advocated a unified European approach, as well as enhanced coordination of activities, especially with the countries on the so-called West Balkan migrant route. Serbia has had a constructive approach to this crisis, for which it has been congratulated. However, although we have had the same problems as EU member states on the migrant route, we have received substantially less funds and we hope this will change during this year. With regards to this, I would especially like to emphasize that Serbia is particularly grateful to the government of Japan for the valuable assis-

tance provided in facing the challenges in this crisis.

Serbia sees Japan as one of its most important partners and friends and places high priority on further strengthening bilateral ties in all fields, including the economy, culture, science, sports and people-to-people contacts. With good political relations as a starting point, Serbia is looking forward to further strengthening economic ties. The Japanese business community already present in Serbia includes investors in the manufacturing sector, representative offices of trading companies, as well as Serbian companies dealing in Japanese products and services. There is also growing interest in Japanese companies expanding activities to the Serbian market and I hope that continued improvement of the Serbian business environment will result in a larger number of Japanese investors arriving in Serbia in the future.

With preparations underway for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, I am noticing with great pleasure the increased interest in

Serbia among people of all ages in Japan. My country is famous for its sporting achievements and at the Rio 2016 Olympics our athletes won eight medals, including gold in water polo, silver in men's basketball and women's volleyball and bronze in women's basketball.

During the past year, many regions and cities throughout Japan have expressed their readiness to welcome Serbian athletes who will be participating in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games to create opportunities for knowledge and experience exchanges. Also throughout 2016, many Japanese people visited our embassy in Tokyo to gain a deeper understanding about Serbia, its rich history and cultural heritage, culinary delicacies and diverse traditional folk dances and songs. I feel very grateful that people in Japan have recognized the large potential that my country has in various sports disciplines beyond tennis powerhouse Novak Djokovic. I am convinced that preparations for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games will bring deeper understandings and even closer friendships between our people.

I take this opportunity to encourage Japanese tourists to

New start in friendly relations

Tadashi Nagai
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-SERBIA SOCIETY



It is my great honor and pleasure to offer my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Serbia, or "Sretenje — the Day of the Statehood" on behalf of the Japan-Serbia Society and myself.

Let me take advantage of this opportunity to mention our society's first study tour of Serbia that took place in October.

I was delighted to see that everybody in the 19-member tour group was so impressed with the kind hospitality and plain good nature of the people everywhere they visited and came back with conviction that each one of us must work hard to inform their friends in Japan that Serbia should be better known as a beautiful and peaceful country and be free from a biased reputation of an insecure country of national conflict.

As to our promotion of bilateral relations, my personal impression is that there is still much left to be done to develop our economic and trade relations by both Japanese and Serbian sides in spite of geographic distance.

The Japan-Serbia Society will increase its efforts for further strengthening better mutual understanding and developing our relations in both economic and cultural terms.

fully utilize the visa-free travel opportunities between our two countries, and visit Serbia and learn about its great culture and rich natural resources that attract millions of tourists from all over the world, and most of all, to meet warm, and hospitable people and typical Ser-

bian *omotenashi* hospitality.

I look forward to continue working closely with the government of Japan, captains of business and industry, scholars, scientists and the friendly people of Japan to promote friendship and cooperation between Serbia and Japan.

A future of strong fiscal growth

Ichiro Aisawa
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-SERBIA
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

Let me express my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of the Republic of Serbia's National Day. Serbia has experienced challenging times since it was part of the former Yugoslavia. Today the country is making all-out efforts to create a foundation so it can grow and develop further as a key nation in the Balkan Peninsula.



talented and capable Serbians live up to their potential, the country's economy will surely achieve remarkable growth. I hope Serbia will join the European Union at an early date.

Serbia is a country boasting world-class athletes and I am sure Serbians will continue to perform superbly in many sports, including soccer, basketball, tennis and more. I am very much looking forward to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. Serbians are also demonstrating exceptional talent in the field of arts and culture, including music.

Japan and Serbia have a long history of friendship. With trust and deep respect, we work to deepen mutual understanding and expand common interests. I will do my utmost to further the development of bilateral ties as president of the Japan-Serbia Parliamentary Friendship League. Congratulations again.

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Republic of Serbia
on the Occasion
of
Their National Day

JT

JAPAN TOBACCO INC.

JT Bldg., 2-1, Toranomon 2-Chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8422, JAPAN
Phone: (03) 3582-3111 Fax: (03) 5572-1463 URL: http://www.jt.com

Congratulations
to the Republic
of Serbia

KINCHO mosquito coil
(the world's first mosquito coil)

Pyrethrum flowers are the source of pyrethroid — a key insecticide component. Serbia is home to pyrethrum flowers and the insecticide manufacturer KINCHO has an additional bond with Serbia, as Mr. Naohide Ueyama, KINCHO president, serves as honorary consul general of the Republic of Serbia in Osaka.

The Pioneer of Household Insecticide in Japan KINCHO

Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Serbia
on the Occasion of
Their National Day

Mitsubishi Corporation