Croatia National Day Special

Common interests amplify 25-year ties

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On June 25 Croatia celebrates its Statehood Day. On this day we commemorate the Republic of Croatia regaining its independence in 1991 and starting the journey to where we are now. Today, Croatia is a free and democratic European Union member, dedicated to human rights, the rule of law and market economy. Along the way, we've enjoyed great support and friendship of the Japanese people, so we are very happy to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Croatia and Japan this year.

Twenty-five years is not very long, but throughout this period there have been many extremely important developments. Croatia and Japan are two friendly, like-minded countries that have been cultivating cooperation in many areas of common interest. This important anniversary is an excellent opportunity to increase cooperation in culture, education and sport. As part of the celebration, we have a number of cultural events organized in both countries. For example, Japan is a partner country at Varazdin Baroque Evenings, one of Europe's most famous baroque music festivals.

We are also celebrating five years since Croatia joined the EU. For us, becoming a member was like returning home after being away too long. As the newest member state, we see the EU as a community of values with many benefits and shared responsibilities. We have very high expectations from the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement that will soon be enacted and surely boost relations even further, enabling the EU and Japan to play an ever-increasing and constructive role around the world.

Situated in central southeastern Europe, Croatia is characterized by a unique blend of Mediterranean and central European culture. Friendly people open to other cultures, a pleasant climate, breathtaking scenery, gastronomic excellence and a rich variety of cultural events and entertainment make Croatia a perfect place to vacation, as well as live, work or study.

As one of the world's most beautiful countries, Croatia is mostly associated with tourism today. Most visit the Adriatic Sea, but more and more visitors come for the bountiful nature, rich cultural and historical heritage, and exquisite food and wine experiences. More than 16 million tourists visited Croatia last year — almost four times the country's population. Among them were almost 150,000 Japanese and we are very happy to welcome more.

The area that still holds enormous potential for further development is the economy. While Croatians very much appreciate Japanese products for their quality and advanced technology, many Japanese enjoy Croatian bluefin tuna that is served in many Japanese restaurants. It is well known that Japan is a country that greatly appreciates quality, so it is very important to present the best products to the Japanese market. We are especially proud that the region of Istria has been named the best olive oil region in the world for the third year in a row by the leading olive oil publication. We hope many Japanese will have a chance not only to taste our exquisite olive oil and tuna, but also learn about a huge variety of Croatian products of superb-quality, ranging from wine and truffles to industrial products, software and electric super cars.

Our ambitions in connecting Croatia and Japan go far and we hope to increase trade and investments between the two countries in the near future. We have regular high-level dialogues and are working intensively on the legislative framework needed for further developing our cooperation.

Judging from past experience, the current level of exchange and genuine friendliness between our people, we view upcoming opportunities of cooperation with a great deal of optimism and invite our Japanese friends to join us in efforts to create a bright future of relations between our countries.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.