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# North Macedonia National Day Special

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## Hailing 30 years of democracy, friendship

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AMBASSADOR OF NORTH MACEDONIA



Today, the Republic of North Macedonia marks the 30th anniversary of its independence, when the vast majority of citizens voted in a free and democratic referendum for a sovereign and independent state.

With the remarkable leadership of the first President of the Republic Kiro Gligorov, the country seceded peacefully, in contrast to the sorrowful experiences elsewhere during the dissolution of former Yugoslavia.

Since the turbulent 1990s, North Macedonia has had to face many challenges. However, with the support of genuine friends in the democratic international community, Japan among them, we have managed to overcome various obstacles and transform

the country into a credible European democracy based on rule of law and a free market economy. Our shared success was confirmed last year when North Macedonia became a member of NATO, an achievement that guarantees stability and prosperity for the country and Southeast Europe.

In this context I would like to emphasize the valuable support and assistance provided by the Japanese people and government. As one of our most sincere friends over the past three decades, Japan has consistently been among our largest benefactors and its assistance provided through various projects has brought significant improvements to many vital areas of Macedonian society.

In the coming years, we have a sound opportunity to enhance our cooperation with a special emphasis on the environment, renewable energy and intensifying economic activity. North Macedonia is endowed with plenty of sunlight and therefore ideally suited for renewable energy projects that could be of interest to Japanese investors ori-

ented toward environmental, social and corporate governance factors. Moreover, since my country has a free trade agreement with the European Union, Japanese businesses could benefit from easy access to the vast EU market through investments in North Macedonia's free economic zones.

Finally, the Olympics have fostered closer cooperation between Japan and North Macedonia. Chigasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, was a splendid host city for the Macedonian athletes. I am especially grateful to Mayor Hikaru Sato and his team for their enthusiasm, cooperation and friendship.

As a recently appointed ambassador to this magnificent country, I am looking forward to doing my best to strengthen bilateral ties and establish many cordial friendships with the admirable Japanese people.

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