

National Day of Romania

PUBLICITY

Romania-Japan partnership entering new phase

By Ovidiu Dranga

Ambassador of Romania to Japan

When President Klaus Iohannis and former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided in January 2018 that Romania and Japan should have a strategic partnership, the world was different — Europe was still hoping that Russia's appetite for aggression and violence could be contained with economic instruments and positive interactions, while in Asia, the dominant issue was the vigorous affirmation of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, which had been drawing wide attention both in Japan and internationally.



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This year, the National Day of Romania is celebrated in Japan at a moment of fundamental change for the international community, when a war of aggression has been waged in Europe for over 500 days, a major crisis in the Middle East is looming and a confrontation in the Indo-Pacific looks like more than a theoretical scenario.

On March 7, 2023, President Klaus Iohannis and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida signed, in Tokyo, "The Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and Japan," aiming to shape the future of our cooperation based on longstanding friendly bilateral ties, as well as on common interests grounded in shared democratic values. The document is comprehensive and visionary, confirming that Romania and Japan are closer than ever in supporting the rules-based international order. Both countries have set a new level of ambition on security cooperation, mutually recognizing their geopolitical weight as frontline states confronted with similar challenges and complementary responsibilities.

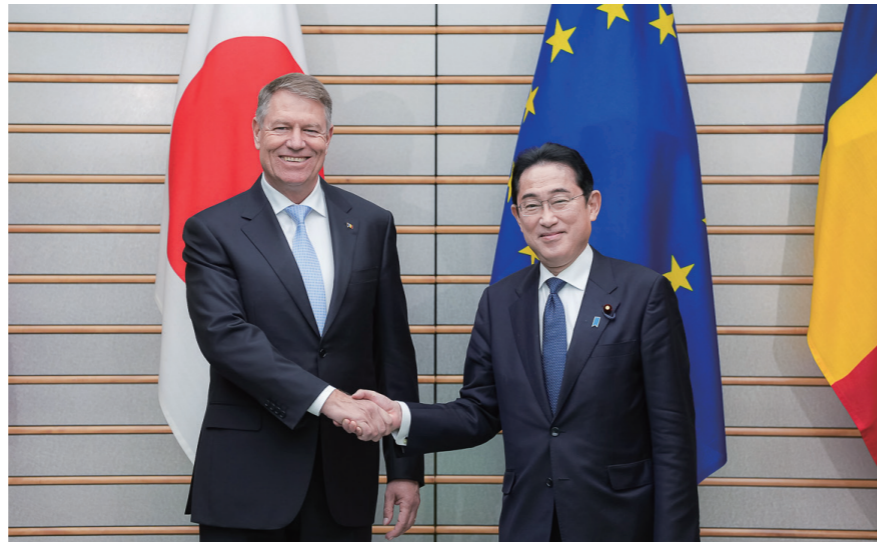
Reaching this historic milestone was the result of many meaningful political and diplomatic interactions, including at the parliamentary level, and of fast-growing economic cooperation. Cultural exchanges played their role. Above all, the Strategic Partnership has been motivated by an unprecedented level of mutual trust and the common understanding of new geopolitical imperatives, acknowledged as strong reasons to foster cooperation on security and defense.

The severe and rapid deterioration of regional security in the Black Sea region and the Indo-Pacific have created new strategic interdependences. Japan's new defense posture and its expanding cooperation with the European Union and NATO, of which Romania has been a valuable member, has given a new boost to our bilateral cooperation. Romania's voice and expertise can make a difference in strengthening ties between the Euro-Atlantic community and like-minded countries and partners in the Indo-Pacific, Japan in particular.

Romania has been a strong supporter of Ukraine and has provided significant and multifaceted assistance to help its neighbor cope with the war, but also to alleviate the global consequences of the conflict. Earlier this month, Romania established a center for training allied and Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets. Romania is also playing a pivotal role in securing exports of Ukrainian cereals, vital for global food security.

Against this background, the bilateral political dialogue in the past year has been very dynamic and substantial. In addition to the summit meeting between President Iohannis and Prime Minister Kishida in March 2023, high level contacts have been consistently taking place in Bucharest and Tokyo. Talks between Foreign and Defense Ministries have become regular, tackling issues such as Black Sea security, continued support for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and cooperation with the EU and NATO on global challenges.

As the Strategic Partnership renews the incentives for further Japanese investments in Romania, hand in hand with the expansion of the strategic dialogue, we have explored opportunities for deepened cooperation in other areas, such as health care, cyber security, IT, and green energy, while conducting a consistent economic dialogue with Japanese institutions and the



Dragos Asaftei

Above: Romanian President Klaus Werner Iohannis and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the signing ceremony of the Joint Statement on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership between Romania and Japan
Right: Brăila suspension bridge over the Danube River



Photo by HotNews.ro

business community. Year after year, JETRO reports have highlighted the favorable perception of Japanese companies on business conditions in Romania.

Along with companies such as Tamura Corp., Makita Corp. or NTT Data, there is also significant Japanese involvement in areas such as the automotive industry and infrastructure. The Japanese consulting and engineering company Padeco plays an important role in the construction of the M6 metro line in Bucharest. IHI Corp. participated in the design and construction of the Brăila Bridge over the Danube River, the third longest in Europe, inaugurated on July 6 this year.

The Extreme Light Infrastructure — Nuclear Physics platform (ELI-NP) near Bucharest, home of the most powerful laser in the world, is also an important facility for advancing research collaboration. The ongoing collaboration with Okamoto Optics and the Institute of Laser Engineering of the University of Osaka will soon take the shape of a high-power optics center at the ELI-NP platform in Măgurele.

It is not by chance that, in June 2023, the first edition of the Romania-Japan Innovation Forum took place in Cluj-Napoca, creating opportunities for effective collaboration between Romanian and Japanese entities active in cutting-edge sectors, aiming for the progressive

intertwining of specific innovation ecosystems in both countries.

In the financial sector, the memorandum of understanding between JBIC and Romania's Ministry of Finance and Eximbank Romania opens opportunities of cooperation in energy security and climate change in Romania and third countries, supporting Japanese companies in their direct investments and business expansion, while diversifying funding sources through the issuance of Samurai bonds.

During my numerous contacts with local authorities, businesses, academia and students throughout Japan, I've experienced firsthand the Japanese people's interest in knowing more about Romania and in making the most of existing opportunities for further cooperation and mutual understanding. Student and academic exchanges, contacts between sister cities and cultural activities between Romania and Japan have finally recovered from the hiatus of the difficult pandemic period, feeding mutual curiosity about our countries' traditions, history and cuisine.

Romania's uniqueness will also be showcased at the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo, together with our vision to achieve a common aspiration for a sustainable future for generations to come, centered on fostering human



Courtesy of JBIC

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Finance Ministry of Romania, Eximbank Romania and Japan Bank for International Cooperation

connection, solidarity, innovation and creativity.

Looking ahead, the effervescence of meaningful dialogue and deepened cooperation in a multitude of fields will keep up, as the natural friendship and partnership between Romania and Japan is entering a new phase, adapted to the new geopolitical reality and committed to supporting the values we share and cherish — democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

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