

Serbia celebrating 140 years of friendship with Japan

By Aleksandra Kovač
Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia

Today we celebrate Serbian Statehood Day, Sretenje, at a momentous time, as Serbia and Japan are commemorating a significant jubilee – 140 years of friendship. This is further emphasized by the fact that our countries are, just days apart, observing their foundations, along with the fundamental acts that marked their democratic and modern developments. Honoring the festive spirit, I would like to extend my respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties, the government and people of Japan.



Aleksandra Kovač

In these unprecedented times of a global pandemic and challenges, I would like to recall the ties that so amicably connect Serbia and Japan. In his historic response to the letter of Serbian King Milan I Obrenović in 1882, Japanese Emperor Meiji addressed the Serbian monarch as his dear friend. The friendship between the two countries thus began with this heartfelt message that has since reverberated and marked the relations spanning 140 years.

The great geographical distance of over 9,000 kilometers, which led our countries on very different historical routes, did not hinder contacts and mutual exploration of relations between two friendly peoples. From the end of the 19th century, Belgrade became a destination for a number of Imperial family members' visits, including one by the Emperor Emeritus as then heir to the throne. We hope that their footsteps will be followed by all future generations.

In difficult times of suffering caused by war and natural disasters, the cornerstone of our friendship has been even more firmly anchored on a sense of solidarity. There are numerous examples of our peoples coming together to support each other: during World War I, the Japanese people gave valuable contributions to support revered Serbian efforts and courageous achievements, in defiance of tremendous Serbian casualties. The level of Japan's development aid to help the recovery of Serbia after devastating consequences arising from dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, to date totaling more than half a billion euros, is also impressive. More recently, when the catastrophic earthquake struck Japan in 2011, our embassy continued to operate in Tokyo, and the citizens of Serbia raised significant donations for the affected population. Both Serbia and Japan were hit by great floods, in 2014 and 2018, respectively; Japan donated millions of euros to our country, while Serbia, for its part, was at Europe's forefront in donating humanitarian aid to help Japan recover from the natural disaster. Japan also provided valued assistance to Serbia during the migrant crisis and with COVID-19 relief efforts.

Intensified bilateral political dialogue, coupled with Serbia's numerous macroeconomic reforms, greater financial stability, opportunities and incentives for foreign investments, have yielded growing interest from Japanese investors in Serbia. Around 30 Japanese companies have forged business ties with Serbia, while the number of direct investment projects is gradually increasing, with some notable new investments that were made, despite the pandemic, by global leaders such as Toyo Tire Corp. and Nidec Corp.

Cooperation between our two countries, which has significantly flourished in many areas, has been further fostered owing to the Olympic Games in Tokyo. The host cities of Fujimi, Hofu, Kashiwazaki and Karatsu did an outstanding job and contributed not only to the success of our Olympic athletes, but also to bringing our cultures and peoples closer together.

I am confident that Serbia and Japan will remain dear friends for countless years to come and that the spirit of friendship and solidarity will continue to define our future cooperation. As a recently appointed ambassador, I am looking forward to contributing to this admirable goal.



Friendship between Serbia and Japan dates back to 1882 when King Milan I Obrenović and Emperor Meiji exchanged messages.

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

JT

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*Congratulations to
the Republic of Serbia
on the occasion of
the National Day*

2022 marks the 140th anniversary of
friendship between Japan and Serbia.

KINCHO

**Congratulations
to the Republic of Serbia**

**誠
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