

天皇誕生日レセプションでの大使挨拶

February 22, 2023

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Her Excellency Dr. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, President of the Republic of Kosovo, H.E. Mr. Albin Kurti, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Honorable Ministers, Dear Ambassadors, distinguished guests,

It is a great honor and privilege to be able to host today's reception celebrating the birthday of His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan. His Majesty will turn 63 tomorrow, on 23rd February. This is the very first National Day reception that we are hosting, following the opening of our Embassy in Prishtina in January 2020, and the difficult period thereafter characterized by "restrictions, restrictions and restrictions" due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am so happy that this has come true.

Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the people of Japan, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the Government and the people of Kosovo on its 15th anniversary of Independence. Happy birthday, Kosovo!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to inform you that this afternoon, I presented my credentials to Her Excellency Dr. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, President of the Republic of Kosovo. Thus, I am starting my official duty as Ambassador of Japan to Kosovo by hosting this memorial event. What a great honor and pleasure it is to do something like this!

In fact, this is my fourth time I am coming to Prishtina, the first time being in August 1988, during my two-weeks' trip in Eastern Europe from Vienna

to the then communist countries – Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Turning around in Tessaloniki in Greece, I passed today's North Macedonia and Kosovo, travelling further to Montenegro and Croatia of today.

The second and the third visit were related to Kosovo's independence and recognition as an independent State. In 2008, my Headquarters sent me here on a fact-finding mission to identify the requirements for my country to recognize the statehood of Kosovo. I wrote a report based on my findings, which were factual and objective, without any political motivation. A couple of months later, in February 2009, I was bringing the letter of our Foreign Minister Nakasone to Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Rame Manaj to establish diplomatic relations between the Governments of Japan and Kosovo.

You can imagine how excited I was when I first heard that I will serve in Kosovo as Ambassador of Japan!

These 20 years between 1988 and 2008 tore this country completely apart, leaving behind the remnants of uprising and the war of independence. Yet, at the time I was writing the above-mentioned report of my fact-finding in Kosovo, in addition to the not much exciting, legal aspects as the basis for state recognition in accordance with international law, I was able to feel the excitement and zeal of the people towards their nation building. Indeed, one of my expectations during my stay this time today is to see the changes and the development that the people of this young country have achieved – although the time for that is too short.

And today, I would like to share the joy of celebrating Japan's National Day with you all – those who have stood out in their quest for building their own nation, and those who have supported these efforts for independence and beyond. Hence, we are united in our common goals and hope – to achieve

peace and security, sustainable development, enhancement of human rights, freedom for all, national unity and good relations with all neighboring countries – but above all – a better future based on the rule of law, the values that we all here share.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having said that, I wish to reiterate Japan's commitment to Kosovo's nation building anew.

Throughout this process, Japan has been constantly supporting Kosovo in its nation building in such areas as human resources development, environment protection including waste management and air pollution control, disaster risk reduction, education, health, agriculture and other social and economic challenges. Technical and professional capacity building of the Radio and Television of Kosovo, RTK, is one of the long-standing projects of Japan and includes investing in up-to-date technology, training of the staff and opening of two regional offices in Prizren and Mitrovica. We value this project as our contribution to democracy of Kosovo through strengthening public broadcasting station and solidifying the fundamentals of freedom of expression, as well as promoting interethnic dialogue and collaboration. I very much hope that our intention will be appreciated as such in this country as well.

Creating a healthy national identity while promoting national reconciliation and peace is another area of great importance. Knowing from our own experience that culture and sports can play such a role, Japan supported the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra by donating musical instruments. I hope that you will enjoy and appreciate its achievements on the basis of its excellent musical performance during the reception tonight. As the birthplace of Judo, we commend Kosovo Government's ambitious project

“Kosovo, the State of Judo”. With already three Gold medals that Kosovar Judokas, Majlinda Kelmendi, Distria Krasniqi and Nora Gjakova have won at Rio and Tokyo Olympics, Kosovo has grown to be even Japan’s rival in international competitions. But we are ready to make Kosovo Judo stronger through our exchange and cooperation programs in the future, since we believe that it will serve the purpose of national unity in the end.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It goes without saying that nation building cannot be achieved by donors’ assistance alone. The main actors are the Kosovar people themselves. It is in this spirit that Japan supports those who devote themselves to this supreme cause of this young nation. Let me express my hope that striving along this path will bring Kosovo closer to Europe and the rest of the world.

Last but not least, I wish to extend to you my best wishes for the success, sustainable development and prosperity of Kosovo and its people, as well as further enhancement of the friendly relations between our two democracies.

Thank you for your attention.