
Japanese Ambassador Says Slovenia Must Show Stability (interview)



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Ljubljana, 1 October (STA) - The new Japanese Ambassador to Slovenia Shigemi Jomori has told the STA that Slovenia must show it is a stable country by taking care of its problems on its own. He believes that its reputation would be damaged and that Japanese companies would be more reserved about investing here if it asked for international financial aid.

The new ambassador, who took over in February after serving as consul general in Italy's Milan, is fascinated with Slovenia in general. He said that Ljubljana was a lovely and clean city and that Slovenians were more "comfortable" than Italians.

He assessed the relations between Slovenia and Japan as very good, noting that they culminated in 2012 and this year with a series of events marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties and high-profile visits.

President Borut Pahor visited Japan in March, while Japanese Prince and Princess Akishino visited Slovenia in June. "For a diplomat these were two best events already," he said, referring to him participating in both visits. Jomori's task is to continue working on the good relations, but he is aware that "it's very difficult to repeat these high-level events". He will also promote events and meetings at lower levels and among people.

The ambassador noted that Tokyo would host the Summer Olympics in 2020, adding that this was a very important opportunity for Japan to present itself to the world. He invited Slovenians to visit the games and "to feel and see Japan directly".

According to Jomori, Slovenia and Japan share certain values - democracy, the rule of law, human rights. The countries have no open issues and have common interests, and they were "always aiming in the same direction, always seeking how to cooperate".

He said that Japan supported the Brdo Process, launched by Slovenia in a bid to boost cooperation between the Western Balkan countries, and added that his country wanted to contribute to this process.

Jomori has assessed the economic cooperation between Slovenia and Japan as rather modest, as Japan imported EUR 45.6m of goods from Slovenia in 2012 and exported EUR 61.7m. He believes however that bilateral economic ties have a great potential.

The ambassador sees an opportunity for boosting economic ties in a free trade agreement which is being negotiated between Japan and the EU. He hopes that the talks will end successfully and that the new framework will "help our business relations too".

Jomori is happy with the rise of Japanese investments in Slovenia, with the latest being a EUR 10m investment by Panasonic in household appliance maker Gorenje. Investments require stability, he stressed, expressing hope that Slovenia will manage to get out of the economic crisis.

In case of Slovenia asking for financial aid from the ECB, "our business people will be more reluctant in their approach to Slovenia", the ambassador said, adding that "Slovenia must show stability to the world".

According to him, Slovenia's advantages are a high standard of living and technological know-how. What is more, Slovenian companies are well acquainted with the markets of former Yugoslavia, which could be used by Japanese companies.

Japan is still recovering from the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami that hit it two and a half years ago, ravaging the north-east of the country. Jomori said that the recovery would be lengthy, as a vast area was affected.