



Embassy of Japan in Israel

Ambassador's Newsletter #1, February 2012

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Time flies, and the fateful year of 2011 for Japan has passed. Now a hopeful year for both of our countries has begun. I am pleased to send you my first Ambassador's Newsletter. In this very first edition, I would like to cover two important topics which may well be to your interest: the 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Israel, and "Visible" Reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

2012- 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Israel

The year 2012 is a special year for Japan and Israel as we celebrate 60 years of our friendship. We have come a long way and achieved a lot together, but there still remains a lot to be done. It is our hope that this festive year will open a new page in our long history of cordial relations towards even more amicable and mutually beneficial relationship.

It was in January, 1952, that the then Foreign Minister of Israel Moshe Sharett sent a cable to Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Japan Shigeru Yoshida, proposing to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries. As soon as Japan restored its sovereignty on 28 April with the Treaty of San Francisco having entered into effect on the same day, the Israeli Government requested that Japan accept the dispatch of a diplomat (minister) to establish its legation in Japan on 29. On 15 May, the then Foreign Minister Okazaki sent a cable to his counterpart Sharett, informing him that the Government of Japan had accepted the Israeli proposal to establish diplomatic relations. Japan became the first country in Asia Israel established its diplomatic relations with.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1952, Japan and Israel have steadily developed an amicable bilateral relationship. The growing relations are represented in frequent VIP visits between the two countries such as Prime Minister Junichiro

Public Information & Cultural Section

The Museum Tower 19th floor, 4 Berkowitz St., Tel Aviv
Tel. 03-6957292 Fax. 03-6960380 e-mail: info@tl.mofa.go.jp

Koizumi's visit to Israel in July 2006, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's visit to Japan in January 2007, Foreign Minister Taro Aso's visit to Israel in August 2007, and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's visit to Japan in February 2008 and Foreign Minister Liberman's visit to Japan in May 2010. Exchanges have deepened and broadened not only in the political arena but also in such areas as bilateral trade, cultural and intellectual exchanges, and cooperation in science and technology. To further promote exchanges and cooperation, the two countries have concluded such agreements as for avoidance of double taxation, air services, cooperation in science and technology as well as in culture and education

As for our economic ties, we all are aware that the large potential which exists between our two countries has not been fully explored. I sense a general feeling of distance among the businessmen both in Japan and here. I felt the same kind of feeling from the businessmen in Bahrain where I served previously. Japan is too far away, or Israel (even the Middle East as a whole) is too far away, they say. There are always stories of success and failures, but not a few businessmen overcame the distance and proved successful in their business with Japan. Our trade volume fluctuated over the years due to the situations in and outside of Israel. From 2001 to 2004 when the security situation inside Israel and the region deteriorated, our bilateral trade also waned to less than 2 billion dollars. The Lehman Shock affected the global economy and our trade volume declined from 3 billion to 2 billion dollars. However, despite the strong yen the year 2011 recorded the highest volume of 3.3 billion dollars. Still, it is far below our expectations and this 60th Anniversary is offering us a good opportunity to lay our heads together to find ways to further promote our economic relations.

I have talked about the physical distance people are feeling on both sides, but if there is a way to diminish that distance, it is the Japanese culture, both old and new, which has been attracting a lot of Israelis. In recent years, thanks to the internet, so-called Japanese pop culture has gained a lot of popularity among young people the world over, including young Israelis, like *anime* or animation films, *manga*, pop music, dance and so on, while traditional Japanese arts continue to captivate the hearts of foreigners. A variety of cultural events covering both traditional and modern arts are planned all through the year (for details, please visit the Embassy's homepage <http://www.israel.emb-japan.go.jp/index.htm>) to bring Japan closer to you.

As for the academic side, I don't think I need to talk much as the contributions by Israeli

Public Information & Cultural Section

The Museum Tower 19th floor, 4 Berkowitz St., Tel Aviv
Tel. 03-6957292 Fax. 03-6960380 e-mail: info@tl.mofa.go.jp

Japanologists are well known in Japan as well. We highly appreciate their high-level scholarly works as well as their efforts to spread the knowledge of Japan in Israel over the years. Today, students can specialize in Japanese studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University and Haifa University. Over a hundred and eighty students received scholarships to study in Japan to date, and they constitute the major part of the teaching staff in Israel today.

Israel is also well known for having the only museum for Japanese art in the entire Middle East. The Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art was established in 1959 with the collection of Felix Tikotin. It is a model example of cooperation between academics, artists, curators and architects of the two countries. Today it has a collection of about 7,000 items of art and crafts covering paintings, prints, textiles, ceramics, miniature carvings called *netsuke*, lacquer ware, and many other artifacts. In this coming June, together with Haifa Museum of Art, it will mount a major exhibition of Japanese contemporary art in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary. People can always have a foretaste of Japan at this museum before they actually visit the country.

Japan-Israel relations have gained a much broader context over the last two decades where Japan's engagement and role in the efforts for peace both by the parties and the international community increased. Japan is the third largest donor for the Palestinians with US\$1.2 billion since the Oslo process started, and its flagship project, among others, called the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" in Jericho, which aims at creating a prosperous region through regional cooperation in the Jordan Valley is a good example of Japanese way of contribution to peace and development. It is a project which will be translated into reality only through cooperation among the parties concerned in the conflict.

Finally, this is my fourth assignment to Israel. I have seen ups and downs of Israel in the last three and a half decades. The Israeli people have every right to be proud of what Israel has achieved in the last 64 years, and I am confident that the country blessed with talented people will continue to prosper. It is my mission to make our relations even closer so that our countries will complement each other in their path for prosperity and further development, the basis of which is peace and stability.

Public Information & Cultural Section

The Museum Tower 19th floor, 4 Berkowitz St., Tel Aviv
Tel. 03-6957292 Fax. 03-6960380 e-mail: info@tl.mofa.go.jp

“Visible” Reconstruction: As Highlighted by the Establishment of the System of Special Zones for Reconstruction, the Cold Shutdown of the Reactors, etc.

Steps taken towards reconstruction

As we entered the year of 2012, we are continuing our relentless efforts towards reconstruction following the Great East Japan Earthquake. Such efforts are paying off. Japan is now on a steady path to recovery. In a little more than a month after the Earthquake, the transportation infrastructure in the affected areas, including the Shinkansen bullet train system and expressways, was put back to normal for the most part. For instance, Sendai Airport, which had been closed after suffering extensive damage from the disaster, reopened on April 13. The central government has taken major initiatives; On April 11, it decided to set up an expert advisory body called the Reconstruction Design Council, which includes the governors of the affected prefectures.

In response to the Prime Minister’s instructions on April 12, on the afternoon of April 17 Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) announced the Roadmap towards Restoration from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. On June 7, the Government of Japan released a report to be submitted to the IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety later in the month. Also, it set up the “Investigation Committee on the Accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Company” to conduct a thorough investigation. In September, the Government presented an additional report (final Report) on the progress in dealing with the nuclear accident since the IAEA Ministerial Conference in June on the occasion of the IAEA Board of Governors and General Conference in Vienna. It also held a briefing on the accident at the IAEA General Conference.

On July 29, the Government finalized its basic guidelines for reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake, which was formulated with the greatest possible respect for both the suggestions of the Reconstruction Design Council in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake and the opinions of the local governments and other entities in the disaster-struck areas. Based on these guidelines, the Government approved the third supplementary budget, totaling 12.1 trillion yen, on November 21. On December 7, it enacted the law aimed at creating a system for designating “special zones for reconstruction.” Such designated zones will enjoy preferential treatment to facilitate the reconstruction process, including special measures for drastically streamlining regulations and procedures (concerning, for example, land use and the granting of fishing rights) and tax and financial incentives (an example of which is waiving taxation for start-ups for the first five years of business). Eligible local governments that seek to be designated as a special zone will submit a reconstruction plan for government approval and implement it if approved. Special measures and incentives will be applied to both domestic and

foreign enterprises based on the non-discrimination principle. The Government of Japan welcomes inward investment by foreign enterprises and visits to Japan by the people of Israel as partners for “open reconstruction.” In this way, the Government of Japan has been working hard with the affected local governments towards reconstruction based on these basic guidelines. At our Embassy, we will be holding a memorial ceremony in March to commemorate the first anniversary of the disaster with themes of remembrance, appreciation, and recovery.

Let us reaffirm that, even during this process of reconstruction, we would like to reiterate our sincere gratitude for the tremendous assistance and condolences extended from the government of Israel and its caring people.

Completion of “Step 2” of the Fukushima Daiichi Roadmap

Steady progress towards reconstruction is also evident in the path to the settlement of the accident at the TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. In its report on the progress of the above Roadmap on July 19, the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters (NERH) confirmed that the goal of Step 1 of the Roadmap - to achieve steady decline in radiation levels - had been achieved. NERH also amended the roadmap itself so as to subdivide the goal of Step 2 - to put the release of radioactive materials under control and significantly hold down radiation levels - into ten targets (categories), including the target of bringing the reactors to “a cold shutdown condition” (a condition in which (i) the RPV bottom temperature is, in general, below 100 degrees centigrade, and (ii) the release of radioactive materials from the PCV is under control and public radiation exposure from additional releases is being significantly held down). In its 22nd meeting on December 16, the NERH announced the completion of Step 2 as scheduled. It said that the reactors at the TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station had been brought to “a cold shutdown condition” and stabilized, thanks to the effort and dedication of a countless number of people involved. On the same day, the NERH’s Government-TEPCO Integrated Response Office was replaced by the Government-TEPCO Meeting for Medium to Long term Measures. This new body will formulate a mid to long-term roadmap based on which the organizations involved will engage in both work in the field and research and development towards decommissioning the reactors. We will continue to report on the progress regularly and thus make ourselves fully accountable. We remain committed to maintaining a safe and secure Japan.

Progress towards reconstruction in the eyes of the world

Since the disaster of March 11, we have taken every opportunity to ensure timely provision of accurate information to the international community. At the same time, we have asked the

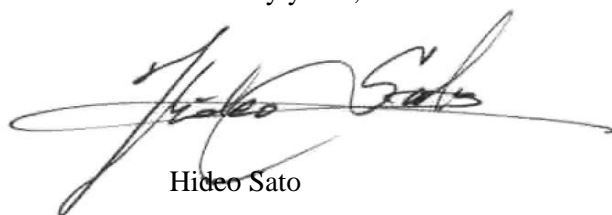
Public Information & Cultural Section

The Museum Tower 19th floor, 4 Berkowitz St., Tel Aviv
Tel. 03-6957292 Fax. 03-6960380 e-mail: info@tl.mofa.go.jp

international community to act based on scientific evidence. As a result, a growing number of countries and territories that had imposed across-the-board restrictions on imports from any area, or broad area, of Japan are now easing these restrictions. Likewise, many of the countries and territories that had introduced restrictions on travel to Japan in the wake of the disaster have lifted some or all of these restrictions. Consequently, the number of foreign travelers to Japan has been on a recovery track. The number for the period from 12 to 31 March fell 72.7 percent from a year earlier. The number in November represents only a 13.1 percent decrease year-on-year. These objective data lend credence to the fact that Japan is on a steady path to recovery and reconstruction.

We are rebuilding ourselves. And we remain committed to achieving that goal.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hideo Sato', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hideo Sato
Ambassador of Japan

For inquiries, comments, and suggestions about this newsletter, please kindly refer to below

Public Information & Cultural Section

The Museum Tower 19th floor, 4 Berkowitz St., Tel Aviv
Tel. 03-6957292 Fax. 03-6960380 e-mail: info@tl.mofa.go.jp