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‘UKRAINE’S VICTORY MEANS A LOT FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ENTIRE WORLD’

– *Japan supports Ukraine in the war that Russia has unleashed against our country, providing financial, humanitarian, and non-lethal military assistance. Ukrainians are deeply grateful for the solidarity that the Japanese Government and society have demonstrated since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Your Excellency, could you say a few words about the evolution of Ukrainian-Japanese relations that has resulted in today’s stage of mutual understanding? What motivates Japan to support Ukraine?*

– Over the last thirty years following the independence of Ukraine, the relations between Ukraine and Japan have been going through much development, but after the invasion, we clearly recognised quite a lot of the similarities and common ground between the two countries. First of all, historically, Japan also once experienced the threat and then war with the Russian Empire. It took place more than one hundred years ago. And geographically, we realise that Ukraine and Japan are actually neighbours with one common country between us. And last but not least, politically, Russia is also causing a lot of trouble in our part of the world, mainly in the Far East. Recently, the Russian military activated joint military drills with neighbouring countries, particularly China. So, all of these things as the background and – on top of that – the real invasion started by Russia against Ukraine have clearly brought the Japanese nation to the conclusion that what is happening in Ukraine could happen to Japan at any time. And with this clear understanding, the Government of Japan, supported by a huge number of Japanese people, started helping Ukraine, including, as you mentioned, humanitarian assistance, acceptance of the refugees and evacuees, budget and financial support, and also non-lethal military assistance. Those are the reasons why our Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Ukraine in March this year and met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Both leaders agreed upon upgrading our bilateral relations to a special global partnership. So, this is what we went through in terms of development between the two countries and based on that, we are ready to continue working with Ukraine in the future.

– *According to Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, the Japanese people forever renounced war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. Japan has restrictions on the provision of*

lethal weapons to states at war. Still, simultaneously there are ongoing discussions in the country about adjusting these restrictions to enable the provision of certain weapons to states that are subject to aggression. Moreover, a plan was announced this April to create a framework for providing non-lethal military support to 'like-minded countries' to strengthen regional security. Could these processes lead to expanding the range of assistance provided by Japan to Ukraine?

– Your understanding of Japan's constitutional and legal limiting restrictions in our defence policy, particularly defence and military cooperation, is quite correct. As I mentioned, the invasion by Russia of Ukraine led to the first time for Japan to be engaged in massive non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine, which, among other things, includes supply of the drones, vehicles, and personal equipment, in particular bulletproof jackets and some other materials, food rations, medical kits, and many more. Even this non-lethal assistance was unprecedented, and it involved quite a discussion in Japan but, as I mentioned, Japanese nation clearly understood and supported the Government of Japan's involvement in the enormous assistance to Ukraine. Yes, on one hand, we continue to have strict restrictions on our military cooperation and military assistance to other countries. But at the same time, as you said, the rapidly changing strategic environment not only in Europe but in Asia and other parts of the world activated rather lively discussions in Japan. I am not going to prejudge the course and end result of the discussions, but at least I can say that we are waiting for where and how these discussions in Japan's political field are going to go. With that in mind, we are ready to continue to work and help Ukraine in the way it will be permitted by a new environment.

– Russia's war against Ukraine has exposed numerous flaws in the modern international security system. For example, the UN Security Council can hardly help preserve peace if its permanent member violates this peace. How does Russian aggression affect the security situation in other parts of the world?

– This invasion by Russia of Ukraine poses two imminent questions to all of us, including Japan. First, how to help Ukraine defend itself against invasion and second, how to prevent repetition of the invasion in the future. While the UN was established in the wake of World War II with a lot of catastrophic results, the founding fathers tried to create a new international order based on the UN Charter and international law, which never ever anticipated a permanent sitting member of the Security Council, which means Russia, starting aggression against another founding member of the UN, that is Ukraine. So yes, something is wrong with this system. I think that many countries try to extract the correct lessons from this aggression, particularly how to prevent future occurrence of invasions. It should include, in my opinion, UN reform, particularly Security Council reform. At the same time, we have to show the world how the aggressor country (in this case, Russia) will be punished in terms of sanctions, in terms of accountability, in terms of compensation. So, with all these efforts, I do hope

that the international community would and should come up with a new international order in which we could prevent aggression in the future. So, the fate of this aggression, including Ukraine's victory, means a lot. First and foremost, for the future of Ukraine, but also for the future of the entire world.

– *The G7, including Japan, has taken many steps to support Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion. One of the most important actions was the adoption of the Joint Declaration in Vilnius in July 2023, which grants certain security guarantees to Ukraine. How do you see future Ukrainian-Japanese cooperation within the framework of this declaration?*

– I completely agree that importance of this Ukraine–G7 Joint Declaration, which was signed and agreed in Vilnius in July this year, cannot be emphasised enough, and it is going to be a very important founding document for many years to come, and I can explain why. After the Russian full-scale invasion started, G7 countries responded in many ways. Particularly, under Japan's presidency this year, when we gathered in Hiroshima (your President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also participated in the discussions), we agreed upon that, first, it is for Ukraine to decide when and how this war ends, and second, G7 countries are ready to continue to work and support Ukraine for as long as it takes. Based on this principal agreement, this document came out, which now G7 plus more than 29 countries have already joined, and I am sure that the number of the countries, which are going to join this document, will ever increase. Based on this Joint Declaration, each and every signatory country should start bilateral talks with Ukraine to agree on bilateral security guarantees. The United States and the United Kingdom have already started negotiations – preliminary talks – followed by some other European countries and I do hope that Japan will soon join the rank of those countries to start negotiations with Ukraine. So, based on this Joint Declaration, we are going to create a network of bilateral agreements providing security for Ukraine in the future until the day Ukraine is to become a member of NATO.

– *The issue of the post-war recovery of Ukraine is already high on the international agenda, and we know that Japan is interested in joining this process. Since Japan is one of the world's major high-tech and IT centres, can Kyiv and Tokyo cooperate in this field? Are Japan's public and private sectors becoming engaged in this process? What other areas might be of interest to Japanese investors?*

– We are now in the middle of helping Ukraine in the stage of early recovery, and soon, we are going to move on to reconstruction. As soon as the war ends, we are ready to embark on the full-scale economic redevelopment of Ukraine. In order to deal with a mass of challenges posed by early recovery, reconstruction, and redevelopment, we need to mobilise not only the public sector's but the private sector's resources. Particularly in the case of Japan, the private sector has more financial resources and technical capabilities, but on top of that, the



Посол Японії в Україні Кунінорі Мацуда вперше відвідав Бучу, на згадку пану послу подарували літак «Мрія» в мініатюрі

Kuninori Matsuda, Ambassador of Japan to Ukraine, visited Bucha for the first time and received a miniature *Mriia* plane as a gift

private sector tends to be much nimbler or faster in responding to ever-changing needs on the ground.

IT is definitely going to be one of the most important areas where many Japanese companies are really interested in working with their Ukrainian counterparts. By this time, more and more Japanese companies and even ordinary Japanese citizens have started to realise how far and how advanced Ukraine actually is in terms of the IT. To be honest, in comparison with Japanese society, Ukrainians are much more advanced in terms of the appliance of the IT systems in everyday life, including administrative procedures or financial transactions. I particularly have in mind the Diia system and, in comparison with it, Japan's system just looks like amateurism. So, we would like not only to cooperate with Ukraine but actually to benefit from Ukraine's experience.

In addition to IT, there are several areas where Japanese companies are really looking into the possibilities. First and foremost, agriculture because Ukraine is one of the top five agricultural producing and exporting countries. Agriculture is naturally the area where Japanese companies would like to work with counterparts in the areas of the growth of production, growth of export, and marketing. Related to agriculture, there is another area where the Japanese companies are interested in, and that is the food industry. The food industry, in this case, comes in quite a wide range of industries: processed food – certainly – poultries, meat, and fish products.

To be honest, I personally am delighted to tell you that more and more people realise that Ukraine produces pretty good wines. So, the food industry is another area, in which I see that Japanese companies can work with Ukraine.

Let's turn to the machinery. Going back to the time of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, this place, where now independent Ukraine exists, always was, is and, I think, will be the heart of research, development, and manufacturing. There are a couple of areas where I do hope Japanese companies can work with Ukraine such as manufacturing automobiles, heavy machinery, and aerospace, aeronautics (drone included). Once peace comes back, Ukraine's accumulated knowledge and experience in machinery and production of weapons can be transplanted into the private sector. Last but not least, it would be remiss if I didn't tell you that my elder son, who works in tourism, keeps saying: 'Papa, once the war is finished, we're all gonna organise massive, you know, group tours from Japan, from East Asia to Ukraine.'

– *Approximately one-third of Ukraine's territory is mined, and this poses a considerable threat to the lives and health of people. Meanwhile, it is known that Japan, as a country with experience and advanced technologies in humanitarian demining, has expressed its readiness to help Ukraine and has already made considerable efforts in this regard. What further steps are planned in this area?*

– Unfortunately, that is true: demining is going to be a long-time challenge for Ukraine and even after the war, it takes quite a lot of time to demine. Recently, I had a chance to talk with your First Deputy Prime Minister, Yuliia Svyrydenko, about the extent of the challenge and strategy in undertaking demining. She explained that for the next ten years, the Ukrainian Government aims to demine 80% of the contaminated land. Next 10 years – 80%. I would say that this is an achievable, very practical, and pragmatic goal. But at the same time, you need to create a good system, good coordination, and good strategy. Here, I am delighted and very much encouraged by the way how Ukrainian Government started to deal with all the challenges of the good strategy, good system, and good coordination. I have in mind the creation of the Center for Humanitarian Demining under the First Deputy Prime Minister Svyrydenko's Office. She invited me to be one of the members of the Advisory Board of this Center and I, of course, accepted it. Ukraine, United Nations, and Japan created a donor coordination scheme. First Deputy Prime Minister Svyrydenko, Denise Brown, UN Resident Coordinator based in Kyiv, and I – three of us – are going to be the co-chairs. We are ready to work with Ukrainian Government, on the one hand, and try to mobilise the support of the international community as well as coordination of the Ukrainian Government and stakeholders.

If you ask me how Japan as a country is going to deal with the demining challenges in Ukraine: we have already started to provide Japan-developed and made, cutting-edge demining machinery. We also started to provide heavy

vehicles which you also need for the demining. We also started to create training programmes, and here we embarked on a very unique trilateral scheme involving Ukraine, Japan, and Cambodia. Why Cambodia? Japan has worked with Cambodia for the last twenty-five years in the field of demining. We accumulated rich experience and at the same time, we created quite a large number of sappers, or experts for demining, in Cambodia. So, this is what we are doing: providing equipment and training, but at the same time, we realise that in order to deal with long-term demining challenges, you need an indigenous, local system, which should involve local development and production of the demining equipment and vehicles. This is going to be a new area, where Japanese Government and some Japanese companies are very interested in working with Ukrainian counterparts. Of course, we welcome the participation of any country and any private sector.

– Japan has accepted nearly 2,500 Ukrainian refugees and helped them with housing, employment, and education. This is very unusual for a country known for its strict immigration policy. Mr Ambassador, how does Japanese society feel about such a large number of Ukrainian refugees in their country?

– It was a challenge. To be honest, it is going to be a challenge in the future. At the same time, I can emphasise that it was my pleasant surprise when I saw that most Japanese ordinary citizens, private and public sector, which include local and regional authorities, came forward to voluntarily work on acceptance of the evacuees and refugees from Ukraine. The number itself might be small in comparison with Ukraine's neighbouring European countries but still, if we take into consideration the long distance from Ukraine to Japan as well as a very small number of the Ukrainian community before the invasion (it was less than 2,000), I think that nearly 2,500 evacuees from Ukraine is a very significant [number]. Most Japanese companies, ordinary citizens, and local communities are ready to work with Ukraine in terms of providing education, including Japanese language programmes, and, if necessary, we are also providing job opportunities, medical and some of everyday needs assistance. We are delighted to see that Ukrainian evacuees currently living in Japan are also not shying away from mingling with local Japanese communities. For example, before this interview today, I just received a WhatsApp message from a friend of mine. She works in Tokyo and her organisation started holding local concerts, where evacuees participated, providing instant lessons about life, culture, history, and language of Ukraine. This is a small example. 2,500 Ukrainian evacuees are already well-assimilated and closely working with the local communities.

With that in mind, there is another important thing, which I would like to emphasise. When the war ends and peace comes back, Japan would also like to help those evacuees smoothly go back to Ukraine to be reintegrated with Ukrainian society, which include another Japanese programme of helping in

reintegration with Ukrainian society. It means transportation from Japan to Ukraine as part of the programme and also if those returnees from Japan to Ukraine need financial support for, for example, starting down businesses, the Japanese Government is looking for the possibilities of helping SMEs (small and medium enterprises). There are many more things that we can do together with Ukrainian Government, regional and local authorities.

If a Ukrainian would like to be temporarily relocated or evacuated to Japan, we are ready to welcome. If they would like to go back to Ukraine, of course, we are ready to support them. Hopefully, many of them are going to stay in the Japanese-Ukrainian relations as friends.

– *The Embassy closely cooperates with Ukrainian educational institutions. You have met with Ukrainian students numerous times, which surely has been a great source of inspiration for them. What areas of cooperation with Ukrainian youth do you consider the most promising for the Embassy? What are the prospects for Ukrainian-Japanese cooperation in the field of education?*

– Education is always high on the agenda of Japanese Embassy in Kyiv. We are working on two ends: first of all, we are helping those Ukrainian students who are willing to come to Japan to study there, and we are helping those Ukrainians who start learning Japanese right here, in Ukraine. At the same time, Embassy is also providing all the information about which universities and colleges in Ukraine have Japanese programme or Japanese study programmes with Japanese universities and colleges. Those universities in Japan are interested in starting educational programmes with their counterparts in Ukraine; Embassy is always ready to help them match and start the cooperation programmes and projects. We are doing this because it is always important to take care of such students both in Ukraine and Japan, who, whatever the reasons, show interest in each other. By the way, if there is a one silver lining coming out of this aggression, it is the recognition of Ukraine and interest in Ukrainian language, history, culture, and religion, dramatically increased among Japanese students. That is the reason why over the last one and a half years, we have noted more and more Japanese universities started providing Ukrainian language and Ukrainian study programmes.

– *Despite the geographical distance between our countries, Ukrainians are keen to explore Japanese culture. Does the growing interest in Ukraine among Japanese citizens reflect on your work? Does the Embassy have any cultural projects planned for the nearest future?*

– First of all, let me explain what Embassy is doing in order to increase our own knowledge and understanding about Ukraine. I asked one of my Ukrainian speaking embassy staff to create study group on Ukrainian culture and history within the Embassy. Thanks to his efforts and initiatives, more and more embassy staff, me included, now joined this study group. We often organise excursions

to some of the cultural or religious heritage sites inside the city of Kyiv. In the future, when the situation permits, we will be delighted to organise tours to the rest of Ukraine. This is what we are doing: first of all, in order to help other people, we – Embassy people – know about Ukraine.

Why is culture so important? Let me try to explain to you. If you think about why this aggression started in the first place, one of the root causes is the Russian leaders and population's ignorance about the history and culture of Ukraine. I don't like to repeat what President Putin talked about Ukraine before the aggression started, but clearly, the essence of this aggression includes ignorance of Ukraine and antagonistic attitude towards Ukrainian culture, history, and religion. With that in mind, the Embassy would really like to support culture exchange between Japan and Ukraine. I would like to tell people back in Japan: 'Look, in order to support Ukraine, we should start with learning and understanding what Ukraine is, what Ukrainian culture, Ukrainian language, Ukrainian nature and religion are. Otherwise, our relations with Ukraine might be ended in a short period of time.' I don't like to see it as an one-time interest but everlasting friendship between two countries. This is why the Embassy of Japan in Ukraine is systematically helping Ukrainian and Japanese people interact in the area of culture, which includes not only culture per se, but language, religion and history.