

Abe-Renzi talks to set new cooperation path

By Domenico Giorgi
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Today on June 2, Italy celebrates its 68th anniversary as a republic.

On June 5, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will meet his counterpart Prime Minister Matteo Renzi in Italy. It will be the first time since 2009 for a Japanese premier to visit Italy. The visit is the paramount conclusion of an intense set of consultations at the political level between the two countries and will establish a renewed framework of cooperation in the political, security, economic, cultural and social fields.

It follows three important visits that took place last May: Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera met his Italian counterpart Roberta Pinotti; Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi met Italian Agriculture Minister Maurizio Martina; and Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Toshimitsu Motegi met Italian Economic Development Minister Federica Guidi.

Italy and Japan share common values and are like-minded countries on a wide spectrum of global issues. We believe that the respect of democratic principles, the promotion of peace, human rights and the rule of law should be the fundamental values of international relations and are, indeed, the basis of development



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and cooperation.

This year, our National Day represents an important occasion for presenting EXPO Milan 2015, due to be held from May 1 to Oct. 31 next year.

For this reason we have the great honor and privilege of hosting Mr. Roberto Maroni, the Lombardy governor and former interior minister, who will promote the Universal Exhibition during the reception that will take place at the famous Ako Roshi Garden in the Italian Residence of the embassy.

EXPO Milan 2015 will host 144 countries, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and companies that are dealing with the challenges related to nutrition and food. The Universal Exhibition is expected to welcome over 20 million visitors, allowing them to experience a unique journey of taste and food culture from all over the world.

Furthermore, the exposition will be a unique occasion to examine some of the main problems we all are facing: social and economic sustainability of the food chain; the shortage of drinkable water and the safeguarding of the planet's biodiversity and resources. The aim is to envisage and provide new solutions to all these challenges, including high-technology, research and scientific discoveries to improve the lives of our children and future generations.

Japan has already joined the Universal Exposition under the theme of "Harmonious diversity." The project and the theme of the Japanese Pavilion—one

of the largest in the exposition with its 4,170 square meter area—will also be presented at our embassy by the Japanese Pavilion Planning Committee.

Japan will participate with one of the most interesting themes of the exposition, the fusion between traditional culture and advanced technology. The use of traditional wooden construction techniques will be combined with modern systems for energy conservation, resistant to earthquakes.

Italy and Japan also share very similar values in the agro-food sector. EXPO Milan 2015 will be an excellent occasion for Japan to present its food culture as an example of a healthy and balanced diet. Its use of fresh and genuine products makes Japanese cuisine intimately close to the Italian cuisine. In fact, interest in Japanese food is recently increasing in Italy, while Italian restaurants are spreading all over Japan.

Moreover, it is interesting to see how Japan implements science and technology into the agro-food chain to secure high standards of safety and quality. In this regard, both Italy and Japan pay great attention to innovative agricultural techniques and the quality of food, aiming at a better balance between food production and natural resources, biodiversity and traditional cultures.

Italy and Japan both share an important awareness: food is also culture.

By the way, we hope that Japan will follow in this regard the path of Geographical Indications. The Universal EXPO



Courtesy of the Trivulzio Foundation

The portrait of Ito Mancio, leader of a Kyushu mission sent to Rome in 1582, has been found in a private Italian collection. The back of the painting bears the inscription "D. Mansio Nipote del Re di Figenga Amb[asciator] e del Re Fra[nco]co Bvgnocingva a sva San[t]a," or "Don Mancio, envoy of the master of Bungo." The characters in brackets are included to clarify abbreviations.

could be an important showcase to promote this vision and in more general terms it will be an opportunity to enhance what today is called "umami."

Italy-Japan relations are deeply rooted in history. The earlier contacts between the two countries trace back to the Momoyama period when missionaries from Italy arrived in Japan, among them the great Jesuit Alessandro Valignano.

Just a few months ago, a testimony of these first contacts has been rediscovered. The portrait of Ito Mancio, leader of the mis-

sion sent to Rome in 1582, has been found in a private Italian collection. The portrait—a beautiful picture—had been painted by Domenico Tintoretto, the son of Jacopo Tintoretto, in Venice, during the visit of the Japanese young envoys in Italy. The mission traveled all around our country, visiting many places like Pisa, Genoa, Rome, Florence, Assisi, Bologna and Milan. This portrait represents an icon of these earlier exchanges, together with the well-known samurai Hasekura Tsunenaga, just recently displayed in Sendai and at the Tokyo National Museum in Ueno.

Since then, the friendship between our two countries has steadily grown and we are eager to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Italy and Japan in 2016.

Economic relations between our countries are very positive. Italian exports both in traditional as well as innovative sectors—such as pharmaceutical and machinery—are increasing, while fashion is performing well.

Furthermore, Italy, in charge of the presidency of the European Union Council from July 1, is deeply involved in the Japan-EU negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) and an economic partnership agreement (EPA).

The bilateral flow of investments between Italy and Japan has great potential. Cooperation in this field is growing and will hopefully be boosted by the economic recovery of both countries and the new agreements under

discussion.

Italy is the first destination for Japanese tourists traveling to Europe. Japan is not only very well connected to Italy, with direct flights to Rome, Milan and now Venice, but it offers to its visitors a variety of cultural, environmental and historical sites. The upcoming international events in Lombardy will represent another opportunity to discover, together with EXPO and the Italian "fashion capital" Milan, many charming locations all around.

Italy-Japan cultural relations are extremely dynamic. Italian culture, including art, music, cinema, design and architecture, fashion and literature are well known and highly appreciated by the Japanese audience.

The Italian Film Festival—at its XIV edition—is becoming an appointment of Golden Week.

The Theatre of "Opera di Roma" has just concluded a tournée in Tokyo. The director of the Theatre, Maestro Riccardo Muti, conducted an outstanding cast of singers and musicians performing two operas of Verdi: Nabucco and Simon Boccanegra achieving great success.

In October this year, the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum will host the first exhibition dedicated to the collection of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, one of the main and oldest Italian Museums.

These are only a few examples of the numerous and high-quality initiatives in which Italy and Japan closely collaborate. (More information is available at <http://italyinjapan.com>)