

## **Ambassador's welcome speech at the Croatian Business Seminar**

Japan Bank for International Cooperation, 9th Floor Auditorium  
Tokyo, April 15, 2009

Mr. Seiji Oshima, Head of UNIDO Office, Mr. Yoshio Tamura, new  
Ambassador of Japan to Croatia, ladies and gentleman,

Konnichiwa.

When Japanese companies started investing in Central and Eastern Europe in early 90's, there was aggression against Croatia, and due to that unfortunate circumstances my country was overlooked by Japanese companies and became so the missing link in the chain of Japanese investments in our region. However, around 15 years later the situation has completely changed, and today's Croatia is politically and economically stable, prosperous country, peaceful and secure, acceding fast to European Union. Actually, Zagreb, the administrative and business capital of Croatia, is renowned for having the lowest crime rate in Europe. The beginning of accession negotiations for European Union in 2005 only proves the stability of Croatia, beautiful and proud country, already a NATO member, while making big steps towards membership in European Union, planned for 2010 or 2011.

Though Japan and Croatia are geographically quite distant, Croatia is emotionally nearer to Japan than one may think. In fact, the Port of Rijeka makes Croatia the nearest country to the sites of Japanese investments in Central and Eastern Europe when heading towards them from Japan by the sea and through Suez Canal. The Port of Rijeka, being the deepest port in Adriatic and with state-of-the-art facilities - offers the swiftest way of transport of goods from Japan to subsidiaries of Japanese companies in Central and Eastern European region. The modern highways recently opened for traffic and the project of new railway Rijeka-Botovo (heading to Budapest) will turn **Croatia from a missing link into a strong link**. If Japan was not too far away in the Middle Ages for Marko Polo, native of the Croatian island of Korčula, why should it be far for you, Japanese businessmen, today?

One thing that should be particularly stressed is that Croatia and Japan, both maritime and island nations, are very close emotionally, through deep appreciation of nature and tradition. I would just like to mention that Japanese haiku poetry is extremely popular in Croatia, with Croatian haiku poets taking home the most prizes at the international haiku competitions. Moreover, Japanese studies have been recently introduced at the Zagreb University, and Japanese investors already have Japanese speakers at their disposal.

Croatia is not the country which offers the cheapest labour force. However, it should be stressed that Croatia offers highly qualified, multilingual and above all innovative and creative working force. Just as an example, Nikola Tesla, our great son, scientist and innovator, is the genius who invented, among many other things, the alternating electric current and set foundations for wireless communication and transmission of energy. He is more and more regarded to be Leonardo da Vinci of New Age, with his 750 patents in the field of electricity and magnetism, of which are many still untapped but futuristic in outlook. The Tesla's successor, young Croatian physicist Marin Soljačić has recently succeeded with his team at MIT to transmit energy through space. MIT team led by professor Soljačić generated electric current between two induction coils 2 meters apart – and the light bulb lit up!

With its 7 UNESCO sites, 8 National Parks and 11 Parks of Nature, with Dubrovnik, the Pearl of Adriatic of which Bernard Shaw once said: "*Those who seek the paradise on Earth should come to Dubrovnik*", with famous oceanographer Jacques Cousteau's referring to the Croatian Adriatic as the world's most beautiful sea – inside out, Croatia is indeed the window to beauty. However, Croatia is also the window to business and investment opportunities, and this is what we are going to tell you about today.

The last but not the least – interest of Japanese for Croatia as a tourist destination is steadily growing with around 144,000 Japanese tourists visiting Croatia in 2008, which is 66% more than previous year, or almost 5 times more compared with 2005. The Japanese discovery of Croatia is apparent in the words of **Mr. Sadakazu Tanigaki**, member of Parliamentary Friendship League Croatia-Japan, former Minister of Finance and Prime ministerial candidate, who said that "**Japan is currently experiencing Croatia boom**". Please let me invite all of you who have never been to Croatia to visit our

beautiful homeland and find for yourselves the true reason for Mr. Tanigaki's words.

I would like to express my thanks to United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – Investment and Technology Promotion Office in Tokyo for accepting the candidate from Croatian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency Mr. Marko Jurcic to participate on *Delegate Programme*, hoping that even in this difficult times such presence and presentation can help in attracting Japanese investments. My heartfelt thanks to Japan Institute for Overseas Investment for their exceptional cooperation during past years and wholehearted support in organizing this seminar. I also extend my thanks to Japan Bank for International Cooperation, Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ for their kind support. At the end, my warmest thanks go to Mr. Yasuhiro Shimizu from Shimizu Corporation for his active participation in this seminar.

And lastly, I am well aware that the recent economic slowdown originating from financial crisis in the United States weights heavily on Japanese companies, particularly ones that are mainly export-oriented. However, the time of crisis is also the time for opportunities and should challenge us in our preconceptions. I do hope that today's seminar will help you to learn about some of these opportunities that Croatia could offer in the field of logistics, as well as in the field of high-end production.

Do:mo arigato: gozaimashita.

**Dr. Drago Stambuk**  
**Ambassador**