

Since my arrival in Lithuania, 5 months have passed. I am enjoying Lithuanian summer blessed with splendid greens and water. When we talk about bilateral relations between Lithuania and Japan, the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant Project draws much attention because Hitachi Ltd. was chosen as a strategic investor. However, our bilateral relations have been developed in the areas where media attention is not sufficiently focused.

1 Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan

On July 8 (Sunday) , the Japanese and Afghan Governments jointly held the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan where delegates of 55 countries and 25 international organizations participated. Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Evaldas Ignatavicius was present from Lithuania. The aim of the conference was to address the international community's strategic message and commitment to supporting development efforts of Afghanistan towards its self-reliance during the Transformation Decade(2015-2024). A specific path for sustainable growth in Afghanistan from 2015 was outlined at the Tokyo conference, and a powerful strategic message, that Afghanistan would remain stable and be able to continue development beyond 2014, was delivered to the people of Afghanistan, as well as to the international community. Japan, as a host nation, was able to secure commitments from international community for strong support totaling over \$16 billion till 2015, as well as commitments from Afghanistan in the areas of developments and governance. Japan in cooperation with Lithuania has implemented many development projects in Ghor Province. We carried out paving the main roads, improvement of provincial hospital and establishment of vocational training center and nursery schools at Chaghcharan.

2 Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

Both Japanese and European leaders announced that the two sides start the consultation towards negotiations on Japan-EU EPA in May last year. On July 18, the European Commission decided to request the approval of the members of EU to launch negotiations for an EPA with Japan. The Government of Lithuania has already made clear its positive position on the launching the negotiations by Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Egidijus Meilunas's statement at the Council of Foreign Affairs last May. According to a provisional calculation by EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht this agreement would contribute to increase more than 1% of GDP in Europe. We hope that the Commission will be able to get the mandate from members of EU to launch the

negotiations as soon as possible and I hope that progress of the negotiations will be made especially during the Lithuanian presidency in the second half of the year 2012, as Vice Minister Ignatavicius told Parliamentary Senior Vice Minister Yamane in Tokyo that it would have a symbolic meaning if the negotiations of this EPA are completed in the latter half of 2013 when Lithuania holds the EU Presidency.