

MINUTES

ON THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY BY THE WORKING GROUPS IN THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA AND JAPAN REGARDING THE DATE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, hereinafter referred to as the Participants, confirmed the following findings of the Working Groups regarding the date of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries:

1. The Working Groups set up in 2014 by both Participants, as decided at the political consultations held in Tokyo in February 2014, conducted extensive research of the available archives from sources including the Bulgarian Central State Archives, the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, and examined numerous documents on the initial contacts between Bulgaria and Japan. Conclusive records of the date of the establishment of diplomatic relations, however, were not found due to some missing documents which were referred to in correspondence on this matter in the archives of both countries.
2. The earliest official record of diplomatic relations found is for the granting of an agrément for the accreditation of the first Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Japan to Bulgaria on 12 October 1939.
3. Official correspondence was exchanged in May 1909 on the occasion of the proclamation of Bulgaria's independence. Congratulations on behalf of the Imperial Government of Japan were conveyed in a letter dated 12 May 1909 by the Ambassador of Japan to Austria-Hungary to the Diplomatic Representative of Bulgaria in Vienna. In reply, gratitude on behalf of the Government of Bulgaria for the felicitations was expressed in a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan dated 19 May 1909.
4. Records show active correspondence and exchange of visits between the Royal Household of Bulgaria and the Imperial Household of Japan since the beginning of the 20th century. The earliest correspondence at the head of state level is a letter from His Royal Highness Prince Alexander of Battenberg to His Majesty the Emperor Mutsuhito informing of his enthronement on 1 November 1879. Moreover, correspondence was also exchanged in the 1930s between the Royal Household of Bulgaria and the Imperial Household of Japan on the occasion of births and marriages in both families.
5. There are records of visits to Bulgaria by some members of the Imperial Household of Japan in the early 1900s. Records in both archives testify to the visit to Bulgaria by His Imperial Highness Prince Kuniyoshi Kuni in March 1909. According to Bulgarian

records, His Imperial Highness Prince Kuniyoshi Kuni had an audience with His Majesty King Ferdinand I and was decorated with the highest Bulgarian order. Moreover, in the Bulgarian archives, a letter of gratitude, dated May 1900, from the Japanese side regarding a visit of His Imperial Highness Prince Kotohito Kanin was also found. Further, in 1931, Their Imperial Highnesses Prince and Princess Takamatsu visited Bulgaria among other countries such as Greece, Turkey and Romania, and had an audience with His Majesty King Boris III.

6. On 27 November 1919, both countries became signatories to the Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria, signed at Neuilly-sur-Sein.
7. Following correspondence between the respective diplomatic missions in Turkey, on 1 November 1927, Bulgaria and Japan exchanged notes concerning mutually granting the most-favoured-nation status.
8. In the Bulgarian archives, a letter from the Embassy of Japan in Turkey to the Bulgarian side was found, proposing the conclusion of an agreement for mutual visa waiver. The Bulgarian record shows that the agreement could not be signed due to legislative restrictions on the Bulgarian side.
9. According to a Japanese cable in 1928, Mr. Yukichi Obata, the Ambassador of Japan to Turkey, discussed some issues regarding a possible appointment of a Japanese envoy to Bulgaria based in another country in the region during a meeting with representatives of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Denominations.
10. Between the 1920s and 1930s, some Embassies of Japan in the neighbouring countries of Bulgaria prepared detailed reports on the economic situation in Bulgaria, including on the market, the banking, fiscal and monetary systems, the legislation concerning trade, industry, exports, trademarks, etc. Among the diplomats who drafted these reports was Mr. Hitoshi Ashida, who later served as the Prime Minister of Japan in 1948.
11. In the summer of 1933, the Embassies of Bulgaria and Japan in Turkey communicated respectively a letter from His Majesty King Boris III to His Majesty the Emperor Hirohito and a letter in reply from the Emperor of Japan. Some internal documents in the Bulgarian archives suggest that in the course of this communication, there could have been an exchange of views between both Embassies on a possible accreditation of an Ambassador of Japan to Bulgaria based in Turkey. There is also a cable by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Denominations to the Embassy of Bulgaria in Turkey, stating “the Government of Bulgaria accepts with special satisfaction the decision of the Japanese Government to open a legation in Bulgaria”. No supporting document, however, was found in the Japanese archives to suggest that such exchange of views indeed took place.
12. The Bulgarian archives show that in December 1938 a letter from the Prime Minister of Japan Fumimaro Konoe was sent through the Bulgarian legation in Paris to the office of the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Georgi Kyoseivanov, in reply to a letter from the latter. Considering the related correspondence from the Bulgarian diplomatic

missions in Moscow, Warsaw and Cairo, quoting information by their Japanese interlocutors that 'soon Japan would open a legation in Bulgaria' or explaining that the delay is due to budgetary or other constraints, there is a possibility that these letters touch upon the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. However, these letters cannot be found in both the Bulgarian and the Japanese archives, nor was any supporting document found in the Japanese archives to prove such a possibility.

13. The respective diplomatic missions were opened in Sofia in 1939 and in Tokyo in 1942.

Taking into consideration the above findings and the fact that the earliest records found definitively attesting to the existence of diplomatic relations are those for the granting of an agrément for the accreditation of the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Japan to Bulgaria in 1939 as described in paragraph 2, **the Participants decide to consider 1939 as the year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and Japan**, pending the discovery of new records proving an earlier date. Moreover, the Participants note that 1909 marks the beginning of bilateral contacts in light of the visit to Bulgaria by Prince Kuniyoshi Kuni in March 1909, and the year in which Japan recognized Bulgaria as an independent state as can be observed from the letters exchanged in May on the occasion of the proclamation of the independence of Bulgaria.