

ASEAN Economic Community by the end of 2015, Southeast Asia represents a relatively young and growing middle-income market of more than 600 million people and a combined gross domestic product of US\$2.4 trillion.

Today, more than 1,000 Korean companies have set up offices and expanded their presence in Singapore, including Samsung Electronics, NHN, SPC Group, Amore Pacific and many others. Singapore is a good regional base for Korean companies to gain access to the ASEAN market and beyond, given our strategic location in the heart of Asia and strong connections to economic partners in ASEAN.

Our position as a leading financial centre also allows Korean companies to tap into our financial markets to raise funds for expansion into the region. Korean

companies can also leverage on Singapore's unique position to tailor solutions, offerings and even business models that cater to the needs of the region. Going forward, Singapore and Korean companies can take advantage of their complementary strengths to jointly seek out opportunities in other countries in the region.

Opportunities also lie in further cooperation on our aviation sector. As aviation hubs in Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia respectively, Singapore and Korea can work together to increase connectivity with the rest of the world. A more connected Asia, both intra-Asia and to the rest of the world, can contribute to more economic and people-to-people exchanges between our countries and regions.

Further liberalization of our aviation links with Korea would connect Southeast Asian and Korean businessmen and consumers to other global destinations, and bring about increased trade, tourism and jobs opportunities.

I believe that with the continued support from our Korean friends, we can build upon the solid foundation of our bilateral relations to forge stronger cooperation for mutual benefit in the years to come.

On this auspicious occasion of Singapore's 50th National Day, let me wish all Singaporeans living in South Korea a Happy National Day, and friends of Singapore a happy and prosperous year ahead. We look forward to celebrating many more years of success for Singapore and close partnership between Singapore and the Republic of Korea.★

**Celebrating the 24th Anniv. of the Independence of Ukraine:**

**“We Are Looking Forward into The Future of Ukraine with Optimism, No Matter What Hardship We Are Suffering”**

by **Amb. Vasyl Marmazov**  
The Embassy of Ukraine in Seoul

Every year on Aug. 24, people of Ukraine celebrate their main national holiday - the Independence Day of Ukraine. Twenty four years ago on Aug. 24, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine declared the independence of the Ukrainian State. This prominent event became a significant factor for consolidation of all the Ukrainian people, who strived for changes in their lives.

Today, Ukraine relives crucial times. The 2014 Revolution of Dignity and the ongoing unprecedented aggression by Russian Federation forced democratic transformations in the Ukrainian society. Driven by the desire to bring living standards of the Ukrainian citizens to the standards of developed European countries, we have been working on improving provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine.

Before touching upon the current developments in amending the Ukrainian Constitution, I would like to draw parallel between this process and adoption of Magna Carta (the Great Charter of the Liberties), which marked the 800th anniversary in June 2015.

This document became the first and powerful symbol of freedom, because it guaranteed certain rights and privileges of free people of medieval England as well as limitation of monarchy power. Subsequently, 63 articles of this Magna Carta

laid the foundation for the British system of governance.

Moreover, back into the 18th century Ukraine (the Ukrainian Cossacks State) experienced its own constitutional process, resulted in signing an agreement between Cossack Hetman Pylyp Orlyk and Cossack officers. This document, known as the Constitution of Pylyp Orlyk of 1710, defined the rights and obligations of all of the army's members. It is also regarded as the first one in the world to establish the separation of powers into legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

The ongoing constitutional process in Ukraine aims at finding the optimal mechanism of interaction between branches of government, intercommunication between capital and regions as well as construction of real democratic institutions, which will be guided by the principles of the rule of law.

In this regard, in March 2015, we have launched the Constitutional Commission of Ukraine, which is tasked with elaborating proposals on the improvement of the Ukrainian Constitution taking into account modern challenges and needs of the Ukrainian society. Representatives of various political forces, national and international experts, as well as the public are involved in this work. Within the Commission, there were created three working groups, which deal with the



**Amb. Vasyl Marmazov**

decentralization, human rights and judiciary.

Ukraine remains committed to strengthening local communities and enhancing their financial resources in accordance with best European practices and traditions. Constitutional reform and decentralization processes are interdependent in establishing solid grounds for better local self-governance, accountability of local authorities and more financial independence of communities.

Decentralization is one of the top priorities of transformation endeavors in Ukraine. Incumbent Ukrainian leadership set it as a clear objective during the presidential and early parliamentary elections campaigns, which took place in 2014. Decentralization is also a part of Ukraine's implementation of Minsk arrangements (paragraph 11 of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements of February 12, 2015).

For the first time in Ukraine's modern history three branches of government fully endorse significant shifts of powers from the central government to local entities with simultaneous empowerment of local communities. We are confident that above

mention is the civilization step towards better local powers accountability and independence.

At the same time, it is essential to note that issues related to defense, foreign policy, national security, the rule of law, compliance with fundamental freedoms and human rights will remain under control of central authorities. Empowering local self-government on the grounds of subsidiary and financial independence is a key solution to balanced democratic development of all Ukraine and its regions, not solely capital or large cities.

Draft amendments to the Constitution are aimed at preventing threats to Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security but they do not provide any special status of Donbas. Transitional provisions of the document envisage that specific aspects of local self-government of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (oblasts) are defined by a separate act of legislation, which goes in line with the commitments under the Minsk agreements. Therefore, particularities of the exercising of local self-government in the

stitutional reform in Ukraine is the improvement of the justice system and amending the Constitution of Ukraine regarding the judiciary.

**T**he current Ukrainian authorities expressed the political will to bring the judiciary into conformity with the applicable European standards. In this regard, the Constitutional Commission prepared and submitted to the Venice Commission draft of amendments to the Constitution aimed at reforming the judicial system and the status of judges in Ukraine.

These amendments improve access to justice, strengthen the independence of the judiciary, fight corruption within the judiciary and bring the justice system into line with the needs of the society and European standards.

On July 24, 2015, the Venice Commission released its Preliminary Opinion, in which the proposals on amending the Constitution prepared by the Constitutional Commission of Ukraine were positively assessed.

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temporary occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are defined by a separate law.

At the request of the Constitutional Commission of Ukraine, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) presented its Preliminary Opinion on the Proposed Constitutional Amendments Regarding the Territorial Structure and Local Administration of Ukraine on June 24, 2015.

According to the Venice Commission the draft amendments introduce a form of decentralization in the exercise of state power, which is largely compatible with the European Charter of Local Self-government. Overall, the amendments are well drafted and deserve support.

On July 1, 2015, the President of Ukraine submitted draft amendments to the Constitution to the Parliament of Ukraine and we expect that adoption of the suggested amendments will take place by October 25, 2015 - the date of the local elections in Ukraine.

It is worth noting that the decentralization reform has been endorsed by the Regional Development Council, which consists of regional councils' heads, regional state administrations' heads and mayors, as well as by the Association of the Ukrainian Cities and the National Council of Reforms.

Another important part of the con-

We believe that adoption of the above-mentioned amendments will be an important step forward towards the establishment of a truly independent judicial system in Ukraine to serve for the people.

The last but not the least part of the constitutional reform in Ukraine is improvement of the human rights sphere. On July 15, 2015, the Working Group on human rights worked out its suggestions for the amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine and submitted them to the Constitutional Commission for approval. The main goal of amending the Constitution regarding the human rights is to bring it into the line with the European legal standards in this area.

Irrespective of ongoing security and economic hardships caused by Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in Donbas, reforms in Ukraine are being successfully drafted, publicly discussed and widely implemented. We fully cooperate with the Venice Commission and others international institutions in the reform process.

**T**he strong political support and financial assistance, which have been rendered to Ukraine by the leading countries and international organizations, contribute to the fulfillment of the reforming strategy of Ukraine. In this regard, I cannot but mention the

principle stance and support of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine on the bilateral level and in the United Nations.

The important recent step, taken by the Korean government on June 30, 2015, is the providing of humanitarian aid worth US\$1 million to support forcibly displaced people in Ukraine due to the current developments in the east part of our country, caused by Russian aggression. We appreciate the ROK for its essential contribution in maintenance of the Ukrainians, who were forced to leave their homes.

Nowadays strengthening cooperation with the ROK is one of the major priorities of the Ukrainian foreign policy in the North East Asia.

For 23 years, since the establishing of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and the ROK, the two countries have been dynamically developing cooperation in all spheres of mutual interest. However, we still have a lot of opportunities for promoting our cooperation in the spheres of economy and investment, science and technology, culture and education.

Moreover, both countries have also been developing cooperation between judicial authorities. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the visit of the Head of Constitutional Court of Ukraine to the ROK in September 2014 and his meeting with Korean counterpart, resulted in the in-depth discussion of the prospects of cooperation between constitutional courts of Ukraine and the ROK.

I would like to note that Ukraine, as a huge market with a population of 43 million people, has many attractions for Korean investors. Ukraine is interested in establishing and continuation of investment cooperation with the leading Korean companies in such areas as agriculture, energy and infrastructure.

We expect that the official visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Pavlo Klimkin, as well as the visit of the delegation of the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine to the Republic of Korea this September will be the milestone events in bilateral relations, contributing to the further boosting of cooperation between the two countries in the spheres of mutual interest.

Celebrating the 24th anniversary of the Independence of Ukraine, we are looking forward into the future of Ukraine with optimism, no matter what hardship we are suffering.

We are confident that the constitutional reform as the objective need that aims at guaranteeing the further development of Ukraine and its full integration into the European community will be fully implemented.

The new Constitution of Ukraine as a kind of Ukrainian Magna Carta should be considered as the only safeguard against dictatorship and the mean of the real participation of every Ukrainian citizen in nation-building processes.★