

Uruguay independence day

Building on a legacy of freedom, equality

Ana Maria Estevez
AMBASSADOR OF URUGUAY TO JAPAN

On Aug. 25, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay celebrates the 184th anniversary of its independence. On this important occasion I am honored to extend, on behalf of President Tabare Vazquez and the people of Uruguay, warm and respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the government and people of Japan.



I am also pleased to extend

my congratulations to my fellow Uruguayans working or studying in Japan.

After Uruguay achieved its independence on Aug. 25, 1825, the new state was organized as a republic, founded on the ideals of freedom and equity. Since then, Uruguay has succeeded in developing strong democratic institutions and has been singled out as one of the most solid democracies in South America.

The protection of human rights and providing equal opportunities for every member of society have been the flagship policies of the government of President Vazquez. Several measures have been adopted to bridge the social

and economic gaps within society. Among those measures, the policy toward gender equality has been a priority. In 2007, a law was enacted for the "Promotion of equal rights and equal opportunities between men and women." Accordingly, a program was adopted in which the government compromises to include a gender perspective in all of its policies.

Although women have free access to education at all levels, there was a small number of women participating in the decision-making process of the central and local governments. To deal with this inequity, a law enacted this April introduced a gender quota for

parliament, local governments and the boards of political parties. This gender quota establishes that for every three candidates, one of them has to be of the opposite sex.

Uruguay is classified by international standards as a developing country of medium income and high human development. In 2008, GDP income per capita was \$9,960 and the unemployment rate was 7 percent.

Uruguay's economy is mainly agro-industrial. More than 50 percent of exports involve animal production, such as meat, wool, dairy products, leather and fish. The agricultural sector involving cereal and rice production, together

with forestry exports (wood chips and cellulose pulp), plays an increasingly important role in the export industry. The service sector — financial services, software, communications, tourism, trade and transportation — accounts for a big proportion of our GNP and is one of the main sources of employment.

Beef is the country's leading export and accounts for 25 percent of total exports. Uruguay produces 600,000 tons of beef per year, of which 450,000 tons are exported to over 100 countries. The livestock is raised in the fields, fed on grass, thanks to the mild climate, fertile land, and water sources from rivers and streams. So it is high-quality, natural beef.

Through the cooperative efforts of the public and private sectors, Uruguay has implemented the most complete livestock information system in the world, which combines a traceability system and the electronic information system SEIIC, also known as the "Black Box." Using radio frequency identification ear tags, each animal can be tracked in every step of its life: from its birth until it enters the slaughterhouse. All slaughterhouses have installed the SEIIC, which allows a beef cut and the animal it came



President Tabare Vazquez

from to be identified. These two systems combined make Uruguay the only country in the world able to have a record of its entire cattle herd and of all its beef exports.

Regarding Uruguay-Japan bilateral relations, it is possible to strengthen our excellent political ties based on respect for human rights, human security, promotion of peace, abolition of all nuclear weapons, firm support of international law and preservation of the environment.

Last year, Uruguay imported approximately \$79 million worth of Japanese manufactured goods while Japan imported forestry products, chemicals, fish and wool products worth approximately \$93 million from Uruguay. Uruguay is interested in increasing trade and in encouraging foreign investment. Also new ways of

economic and technical cooperation are sought. Here are two examples.

Japan has made an important donation of judo equipment (including training teachers) to our Ministry of Tourism and Sports so as to expand the practice of this sport, which is increasingly popular, and thus promote cultural exchange.

Regarding preventing global warming, Uruguay and Japan are working together in a project that will enhance energy efficiency in Uruguay and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The project promotes the use of the photovoltaic solar system as a new source of clean energy. The financial mechanism will be provided through funds from the "Cool Earth

Partnership" established by Japan last year.

I would like to mention that H.I.H. Princess Takamado visited Uruguay in September last year, and the visit this February by the president of the Uruguay Parliament and a group of parliament members to study the use of nuclear energy in Japan.

In closing, I would like to thank Takeo Kawamura, president of the Japan-Uruguay Parliamentary Friendship League, for his support and commitment to promoting mutual understanding and cooperation between our two countries.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to address its many readers.

Relationship of enduring friendship, cooperation

Katsuhiko Tsunoda
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-URUGUAY SOCIETY

As president of the Japan-Uruguay Society, I would like to extend my wholehearted congratulations on the occasion of the 184th anniversary of the independence of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.



I would also like to express my sincere respect and affection for the government of President Dr. Tabare Ramon Vazquez Rosas and the people of Uruguay, including the about 130 who live in Japan. Moreover, I would like to express my heartfelt respect for the work of H.E. Ambassador of Uruguay to Japan Ana Maria Estevez.

Japan and Uruguay are peace-loving, mature demo-

cratic countries. Uruguay's positive activities in international relations and cooperation with Japan are highly appreciated by our country. This is a year of important elections for both countries, though I am confident that the friendly ties that unite our countries will be strengthened moreover.

Japan and Uruguay, although situated at almost opposite ends of the Earth, have enjoyed a good bilateral relationship since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1921. Ties include multilateral economic and cultural exchange, as well as economic and technical cooperation, including the dispatch of senior volunteers.

Mutual visits of distinguished guests are continuing, as shown by the visit of H.I.H. Princess Takamado to Uruguay to mark the centenary of Japanese emigration

in September 2008. Unfortunately, the planned visit of President Vazquez to Japan scheduled for October was postponed.

This February, Yasutoshi Nishimura, parliamentary vice minister for foreign affairs, visited Uruguay and a parliamentary delegation, headed by Alberto Perdomo, speaker of the House of Representatives, came to Japan. In June, a Uruguayan team played in the U20 World Rugby Championship in Japan. In autumn 2008, as in other years, Uruguay participated in the meeting of the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation in Japan, which will be organized this year at a ministerial level.

In spite of the recent world economic difficulties, economic relations between both countries have been progressing well. In June, the Japanese government provided up to

¥29.2 million to Uruguay for a project to supply judo equipment.

Cultural exchange has developed, as shown by the presentation of several Uruguayan films in Japan. "The Pope's Toilet" was well received at the fifth Hispanic Beat Film Festival in 2008 and other Uruguayan films are expected to be presented there this year. In March, the Embassy of Uruguay in Japan organized a preview of "Alive," with a presentation of related still photos. And in June, "Masangeles" was presented at the International Digital Film Festival.

In conclusion, we sincerely hope that the bonds of friendship and cooperation between our countries will become stronger with each year, and that the Japan-Uruguay Society may contribute to this strengthening in its own way, however small.

Congratulations
to the People of Uruguay
on the 184th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day

The Japan-Uruguay Society

President: Katsuhiko Tsunoda

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