

Spain national day

Honoring the personification of sacrifice

Miguel Navarro
AMBASSADOR OF SPAIN

Today we celebrate Spain's National Day. Oct. 12 marks the date of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492.



This event changed the view of the world and brought continents and civilizations closer together.

On this day, I have the honor of conveying greetings from the Spanish Royal Family to the Imperial Family.

As His Majesty King Juan Carlos I said during his state visit to Japan in 2008, Spaniards and Japanese have maintained both a dialogue and a mutual admiration that date back almost 500 years.

In 2013, we are going to com-

memorate the 400th anniversary of the Keicho Embassy's visit to King Phillip III of Spain and we will contribute to this anniversary with a year of Spain in Japan.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our profound sympathy and solidarity with the victims of the triple disasters of March 11 in Tohoku. I wish to convey to the people of Japan our profound admiration and respect for their response to one of the worst instances of devastation in Japanese history. The Japanese nation has given us all a lesson in courage and social responsibility, reconfirming its deeply rooted traditional values of public spirit, solidarity, dignity and resilience.

As a token of our recognition, the Prince of Asturias (Spanish Crown Prince) Award for Concord 2011, our most prestigious international prize, has been given to the "Heroes of Fukushima." The prize selection commit-

tee chose them as the collective embodiment of the highest human values. These anonymous heroes, who have devoted themselves to containing the terrible effects of the nuclear accident triggered by the tsunami, are the personification of sacrifice.

Relations between Spain and Japan cover many fields, and have become increasingly rich and fruitful. The 38 Hispanic Societies that have been constituted across Japan have been an important factor in this process.

Spain has undergone a process of considerable economic and technological modernization over the past 25 years since becoming a member of the European Union. Over 80 Japanese companies have played a very important role in this process, investing in Spain since the 1980s in key areas.

As a member of the EU, Spain will continue to support efforts to develop new frameworks of co-

operation to foster free trade and political cooperation with Japan.

Renewable energy is one of the areas in which Spain has made the most progress in gaining a leading international position. In this field, cooperation between Spain and Japan is relatively advanced and the possibilities of joint projects have great potential. Japanese and Spanish companies are jointly building the largest photovoltaic plant in the world in Australia.

This year, the Japan-Spain Symposium, which will take place in Sendai, will focus on highly relevant issues such as disaster prevention and urban planning, renewable energy and energy saving. It will provide another opportunity for opening new paths of cooperation.

I would like to finish by thanking The Japan Times for this opportunity to broadly outline the state of our relations with Japan.