

Ecuador independence day

Promoting sustainable, equitable development

Leonardo Carrion
AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR

On Aug. 10, Ecuador commemorates 203 years of its independence. On this special day for my country it is my privilege to greet, through this prestigious newspaper The Japan Times, the noble Japanese citizens and my fellow Ecuadorian residents in Japan, and to share with the readers some reflections on the advancement and important achievements Ecuador has made during the last five years.



Ecuador, an Amazonian and Andean country, is a multiethnic and multicultural nation. Its coasts are bordered by the Pacific Ocean, which not only cradles the beautiful beaches but also promoted navigation, contact and commerce with Japan for over a century. Ecuador traces its origins back to 20,000 B.C. Since the 16th century, the immigration from Europe, particularly Spain, as well as from Africa and

Asia has contributed to form and consolidate the multiethnic and multicultural Ecuadorian society.

Nature has been generous to Ecuador. In just 256,370 sq. km of territory one of the richest megabiodiversities on the planet exists. In four geographic areas distributed in the Sierra, Amazon, Coast and Insular (Galapagos) regions, it contains a numerous and exotic display of native species and endemic fauna and flora. In its territory there are also some of the highest mountains and volcanoes in the world.

As a result of the mix of races and the cultural syncretism existing since the mid-16th century, and under indigenous, Spanish, Italian, Flemish and Moorish influences, the city of Quito developed a wide, prolific artistic production. In these artistic and architectural movements, there is a harmonious combination of the American and the European that made the Ecuadorian capital, together with the city of Krakow, Poland, the first city to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, in 1975. Some years later, the city of Cuenca, in the

south of the country, received a similar distinction.

Ecuador maintains relations with most countries and through a citizens' diplomacy for human development and an active participation in international and regional forums, promotes regional integration as a mechanism of cooperation and solidarity to achieve together the "good living"; progressive development of international rights; reinforcement of dispute settlement mechanisms, recognition of asymmetries between the countries and the implementation of the principle of special and differential treatment beyond the trade component. Furthermore, the establishment of a new international financial architecture and the reform of international archaic institutions, such as the U.N. Security Council, are promoted.

Likewise, the internal legal system enshrines Ecuador as a territory of peace — a principle that has been adopted by the states making up UNASUR, the Union of South American Nations — condemns the devel-

opment and use of weapons of mass destruction and prohibits the existence of foreign military installations in its territory. In relation to the rights of the immigrants and their families, the promotion of the universal citizenship and the free movement of all persons around the world are basic elements of Ecuadorian foreign policy.

The realization of the Yasuni-ITT initiative in the national park of the same name — declared by UNESCO as a part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, which is to conserve 846 million barrels of underground petroleum, 20 percent of the proved reserves of the country (equaling the emission of 407 tons of carbon dioxide) — is a contribution by Ecuador to the conservation of biodiversity, mitigation of climate change of the planet and promotion of a sustainable and equitable development.

The constitution recognizes and enshrines nature's rights and legal development of singular importance, for which this should be treated as a subject of rights, respecting its existence, vi-

tal cycles, structure, functions and its evolutionary process as well as the right to recuperation, independently from the obligation of the state or individual or juridical persons to indemnify the individuals or collectives dependant on the affected natural systems.

During the last five years, the national government headed by President Rafael Correa has promoted important changes with the intention to transform the country and construct not only a democratic but also a fair and equitable society. Likewise, unemployment has been reduced significantly and the investment in education, health, social inclusion and residential construction have triplicated, with results of a considerable increase in its population's quality of life.

It's important to mention, through social and genetic-clinical characteristic studies and the public health network, all the handicapped people in Ecuador were geo-referentially located, and 825,576 cases were attended to with special treatment and 26,327 were considered critical and in priority situations. Approximately 300,000 handicapped people in critical situations have received medical assistance, sticks, crutches,

audiovisual kits, wheelchairs, air cushions, hearing aids, prostheses and orthotics.

In the framework of the constitution, which recognizes that the ancestral lands and territories are imprescriptible, inalienable and indivisible, almost 700,000 hectares were given to the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians. Also, the intercultural and bilingual education system was strengthened in 16 indigenous nations.

My country registered the highest public investment in Latin America in 2011 in relation to its gross domestic product (GDP), and the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) stated in its report that Ecuador is the second country that reduced poverty in the region.

In bilateral field, President Correa visited Japan in September 2010 and Vice President Lenin Moreno in October 2011 as well as state ministers and many Ecuadorian businessmen. This contributed to the strengthening of the high-level political dialogue, friendship and cooperative relationships and commercial exchanges, mainly of products such as petroleum, flowers, bananas, coffee, cacao,

Manila hemp, fruits, juices and fruit preserves, fish flour, tuna and sea products, among others.

On the other hand, the adoption in Ecuador of the Japanese/Brazilian digital television system and other projects of top priority for the national government contained in the Investment Catalogue for Strategic Projects 2012 open a wide range of possibilities in favor of Japanese companies to invest in Ecuador in the sectors such as clean energy, petroleum, gas, telecommunications, the mining industries, among others.

I have to make a special mention of the visit and scientific works achieved in July and August 1918, by a distinguished Japanese doctor and investigator, Hideyo

Noguchi, for the fight and eradication of yellow fever, for which he was granted doctorates honoris causa by the Universities of Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca and recognition by the national government, among other distinctions.

I would like to conclude my message by offering my best wishes for the prosperity and good health to His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito, the Imperial family and the honorable Japanese citizens and government. I stress the decision of the national government of Ecuador and its diplomatic mission in Tokyo to strengthen even more the friendly relations and cooperation that happily exist between both nations.

Congratulations
to the People of Ecuador
on the 203rd Anniversary of Their Independence

Flower & Display
Rainbow Co., Ltd.

4-1, Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0094
TEL.: (03) 3265-4401
President: KINKO OTANI, Honorary Consul-General of Ecuador