

# Spain national day

## Relations with Japan near fourth centennial

Miguel Navaro  
AMBASSADOR OF SPAIN

Oct. 12 marks the date of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, which we celebrate in Spain with our National Day. This event paved the way that led half a century later to the arrival of Francis Xavier in Japan, which is the starting signal of our friendly, long bilateral relationship.



On this occasion I have the honor to convey to the Imperial family the traditional message of friendship and good will from

the Spanish Royal Family. As His Majesty the King often recalls, Spaniards and Japanese have maintained both a dialogue and a mutual admiration that date back almost 500 years.

As a consequence of the triple disaster generated by the Great East Japan Earthquake last year, a widespread sentiment of solidarity with the People of Japan and of appraisal of the Japanese resilience in confronting these hardships has taken root among my compatriots. This year, Japan has again been distinguished with the most prestigious Spanish award, the Prize Príncipe de Asturias for Communication and Humanities, to Shigeru Miyamoto. This is also a recognition

to Japanese cultural dynamism and ingenuity. This award will be presented by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Don Felipe later this month.

Next year we are going to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Keicho Mission sent by Lord Date Masamune to King Phillip III of Spain and led by Hasekura Tsunenaga with a dual Year of Spain in Japan and a Year of Japan in Spain. A bilateral project is under way to inscribe this event in the UNESCO Registry of the Memory of the World. The Japan Foundation in Madrid and the Cervantes Institute of Tokyo, the largest of our network and a center for promotion of the Spanish language and the

diverse and rich cultures of the Spanish-speaking countries in Japan, will play an important contribution in this celebration.

Spain, like Japan, is confronted by great challenges today. Among them, the most pressing need for Spain is overcoming our serious financial difficulties and the ensuing economic recession, the worst combination that we have experienced in more than half a century. It is not a country crisis but the end of cycle of a successful model of economic development and modernization, which has shown important flaws that need to be addressed through profound structural reforms and sound policies. Somehow, the challenge is to find how to reinvent ourselves as we did 25 years ago. A new government presided by Mariano Rajoy was elected last November with a landslide parliamentary majority, indicating voters resolve to confront these crises at whatever the cost. A large number of important structural and policy measures have been adopted since and other are in the processing line. Economic imbalances responsible for the Spanish crisis are being corrected, from house prices — now down up to 40 percent from their peak in 2007 — to balance of payments current account past deficits, now in surplus by strong exports and the services sector, as well as public

deficit reduction to 6.5 percent at the end of the year, down from 9 percent in 2011. Structural reforms have equally been introduced with wide-ranging overhauls of social security, pensions and employment legislation, fur-

ther liberalization of goods and services markets, greater transparency in the public sector and onerous regulation, among other measures.

Japan has been an important partner during our process of

economic transformation and is highly valued as a reliable investor in Spain. We would like to continue finding better ways and opportunities in new areas, especially in high-tech and in sustainable economy sectors. The


next yearly Spain-Japan Symposium in Seville will provide a good framework for analyzing these opportunities.

I would like to thank The Japan Times for publishing this message.

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**the Spanish National Day**

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**Monumental:** Located in central Spain, Toledo is one of the former capitals of the Spanish Empire and has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1986. NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE OF SPAIN