

Ecuador National Day Special

Bilateral relations continue solid growth

CESAR MONTANO
AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR



On Aug. 10, 1809, the first independent movement of our country took place when a group of patriots decided to disregard the authority of the Spanish crown established under

the territories governed by the Royal Court of Quito. Although the patriots' undertaking was bloodily repressed a year later, their democratic notions were maintained and materialized in the battle that took place on the slopes of the Pichincha volcano in Quito, on May 24, 1822.

In the 214 years that have passed since that pivotal day in August, Ecuador continues to promote freedom and inclusive democracy, respect for human rights and diversity. Proof of this is the decision taken by President Guillermo Lasso, in accordance with our constitution, to dissolve the National Assembly and convene general elections on Aug. 20.

On the other hand, this year we commemorate 105 years of diplomatic relations with Japan, a country with which we share democratic values, the need to respect an international order based on the rule of law, the condemnation and denunciation of military coercion to resolve differences between countries, and the protection of civilian populations in armed conflicts — in short, the permanent promotion of the principles and rules of the United Nations charter.

The sharing of these principles with Japan allows us to work closely in our ongoing participation in the United Nations Security Council. In this regard, I recall the participation and support of our foreign minister for the dedicated ministerial meeting convened by his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi in January in New York, over the idea of a free and open international order based on the rule of law — a meeting that took place upon Japan's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council.

Our bilateral relations have strengthened over the past year. Hayashi's visit to Ecuador in January, when he met Lasso and several ministers of state, confirmed our strong links.

For our part, we have proposed several agreements to bolster ties, including a very relevant trade deal that would consolidate our future trade and investment flows. At the same time, we seek to be part of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. Ecuador has just concluded two trade negotiations with the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea. We believe it is essential for a country of Japan's status in the region, and across the world, to find places that deserve our trade and investment relationships.

We have also proposed an open skies agreement that would enable more direct air connections between our countries and at the same time benefit both regions and member states. We also seek to promote greater relations between our younger peers and, to this end, have proposed a work and holidays treaty, as well as a visa exemption arrangement.

Together with our close political relations, we have to take into account the important cooperation received from Japan in the development of several areas of benefit to our most vulnerable population, which we greatly appreciate. We firmly believe Japan can contribute much in terms of addressing new threats our countries face nowadays, such as transnational organized crime and illegal drug and arms trafficking. Likewise, measures to combat cybercrime, regulate artificial intelligence, create value chains between like-minded countries such as ours, as well as to conserve and protect nature on land or in the ocean. It is equally pertinent to mention our commitment to end plastic pollution of the seas, and those multilateral negotiations are being led by a distinguished Ecuadorian diplomat.

I would also like to mention Ecuador's contribution to preserving the worldwide known natural heritage of humanity, the Galapagos Islands, by creating a new 60,000-square-kilometer marine reserve

named Hermandad that expands the islands' existing marine reserve and will provide a safe migratory route for endangered species, including sharks, manta rays, turtles and whales.

As a complement to this, the Ecuadorean government negotiated the largest debt-for-nature swap in history, a deal that will generate savings of more than \$1.1 billion of our external debt and create a \$450 million fund that will be invested in the protection and conservation of the Galapagos Islands.

Finally, we celebrate a great archaeological discovery — that cacao was first grown, harvested and consumed in the Ecuadorian Amazon region more than 5,000 years ago. Scientifically verified evidence that this product, of great importance for the Japanese chocolate industry, was cultivated in our country thousands of years ago, has prompted us to organize several exhibitions throughout Japan devoted to convey this great contribution to humanity, as we are the world's largest exporter of fine aroma cacao.



Left: Ecuador is the leading producer of fine aroma cacao. Right: The Galapagos Islands provide a natural habitat for endangered species, including manta rays, sharks, turtles and whales.

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to the People of Ecuador on
the Anniversary of Their Independence

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to the People of the Republic of Ecuador
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Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi (left) poses with Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso in Quito in January.

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