

El Salvador national day

Two centuries since call to independence

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It is a pleasure for me to have this opportunity to address readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the bicentenary of the First Call to the Independence of El Salvador and the Central American nations from the Spanish Crown.



On the morning of Nov. 5, 1811, in San Salvador, a group of Salvadorans stood up in an emancipation movement, searching for better social, political and economic conditions for the progress and development of the nation. The group's leader was the future president of the Federal Republic of Central America, Manuel Jose Arce.

Now, 200 years later, it is a good time to reflect on what

we have done until now, and what should be done from now, to build a better future for our cherished children and next generations.

In El Salvador, we are facing several social, economic and climate change problems. It is a challenge for all Salvadorans and only by unifying our efforts will we be able to overcome such problems.

During the 76 years of diplomatic relations between El Salvador and Japan, strong bonds have been built between both countries. After the end of World War II, the first country in which a Japanese company had a factory was El Salvador. Also, it is important to mention that the second country in the world to establish an agency to sell Japanese cars (Toyota) was also El Salvador. Very important infrastructure, such as the international airport and La Union Port, have been constructed with Japanese yen credit and Japanese

technology.

Geographically, both nations have things in common, such as a high density of population, a land of beautiful volcanoes, lakes and rivers, and the fact that we are affected by earthquakes and other natural disasters.

Very recently, we experienced one of the worst periods of rain in the history of El Salvador and other countries of Central America. The tropical depression from Oct. 10 to 20 devastated houses, roads, bridges and plantations, and 53,000 people had to be evacuated. The government of El Salvador has made a call for humanitarian assistance to the international community. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express gratitude to the Japanese government, which promptly sent to El Salvador goods for this emergency.

I would like to express once again, on behalf of the government and people of El Salvador,

our deepest sympathy to the victims of the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

I had the opportunity to visit the affected cities such as Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, and shelters such as in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, with the aim to show the solidarity of El Salvador with Japan directly to the refugees just one month after the disaster. I also visited the city of Kamaishi, Iwate Prefecture, to have a cultural exchange with children who survived the tsunami at Unosumai Elementary School.

Last month, I visited with a group Miyagi and Iwate prefectures. It is admirable the reconstruction work that has taken place already only seven months after the earthquake and tsunami.

I hope and pray for the quick reconstruction of the area. I strongly believe that Japan will show to the world a new model of sustainable development.