

Close Pacific Ocean neighbors

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AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR

On August 10, Ecuador commemorates 205 years of independence and, thanks to the invitation of The Japan Times, as Ambassador of Ecuador in Tokyo, it is a privilege for me to greet Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko; Prime Minister H.E. Shinzo Abe;



the Japanese people; and my fellow Ecuadorians living in Japan on this special day.

Ecuador traces its origins back to 20,000 years B.C. Archeological vestiges dating back 5,000 years suggest contact could possibly have been made between members of the Valdivia culture on the Ecuadorian coast and the Japanese Jomon culture. The extreme similarities of both cultures' ceramics support this hypothesis.

Ecuador and Japan share the common border of the Pacific Ocean. Both countries are part of the "Ring of Fire," sharing an extraordinary, but violent, geography of earthquakes and volcanoes. This has made our people tough, resilient and in tune with their environment.

One of Japan's foremost scientists, Dr. Hideo Noguchi, who contributed to the world the yellow fever vaccine, conducted his research mainly in Ecuador. Also, Dr. Koichi Otani, in his research concerning gerontology, made Vilcabamba – Ecuador's "Longevity Valley" – one of his principal subjects. These are only two examples showing how friendly relations between both countries have endured through the years.

Our trade is very important and, without even knowing it, Japanese people frequently purchase high-quality Ecuadorian products, including shrimp, bananas, orchids, golden berries, broccoli, palm hearts, yellowfin tuna, roses, coffee, cocoa beans and others. Of course Japanese find *tagua* buttons on the finest shirts and wear Panama hats, which are actually Ecuadorian *Toquilla* hats, woven in the Montecristi area.

Relations between our countries have been very active over the last decade and included a visit to Tokyo by President Rafael Correa in 2010. Both governments have pledged to strengthen their relations, which will be highlighted in 2018, with the celebration of the first century of the establishment of diplomatic ties. For this occasion, a very wide and comprehensive agenda is being prepared.

This last decade, Ecuador has experienced an impressive and radical transformation of its legal framework (constitution and related laws), national infrastructure, and investment environment. With an estimated GDP of \$67 billion in 2011 and an average growth of more than 5 percent, there is an extraordinary outlook for the future. From 2000 onward, Ecuador has maintained stable macroeconomic figures, with solid fiscal discipline and inflation remaining under 2 percent. And in 2017, my country will reach energy self-suffi-



President Rafael Correa

ciency – using no fossil fuels – and will begin exporting clean electricity to neighboring countries.

In the prestigious 20th World Travel Awards, Ecuador was honored as the "2013 World Green Destination," for having – among many other characteristics – the "best preserved historic center in Latin America" and for being home to 33 government-protected natural reserves, including Sangay and Galapagos national parks and the Galapagos Marine Reserve. These areas, due to their irreplaceable natural values, have been declared UNESCO Natural World Heritage sites. Additionally, Ecuador hosts 27 different ethnic groups, each possessing a priceless and unique cultural heritage, making tourism in Ecuador a truly life-changing experience.

To sum up, Ecuador is now synonym for quality. Quality of its products; quality of its people, and quality in general for all the richness it has to offer, a richness we are striving to share with the whole world.

Reiterating my special greetings on this significant date, I express my best wishes of prosperity and health to Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and the people of Japan. Finally, let me share with you the decision of the national government of Ecuador and its diplomatic mission in Tokyo, of strengthening even more the friendly relations and cooperation that exist between both nations.

Congratulations to the People of Ecuador on the 205th Anniversary of Their Independence

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