

(Anniversary special)

# Spain National Day

## An association for peace, growth and innovation

**GONZALO DE BENITO**  
AMBASSADOR OF SPAIN



On the occasion of our National Day, I have the honor to convey to the Imperial family, to the government and people of Japan a message of goodwill and friendship from the Royal Family,

the government and the people of Spain.

I also wish to convey my congratulations to all Spanish citizens living and working in Japan, and wish them all the best in their personal and professional endeavors.

We celebrate today a stellar moment in the history of our country. On Oct. 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus, sailing westward through the Atlantic Ocean, discovered the Americas, in a mission sponsored and supported by the Spanish Crown.

A little more than a century later, in 1615, the Daimyo of Sendai, Date Masamune, sent the Keicho Mission to the King of Spain, Philippe III. It made Japan the first Asian country to cross the Pacific Ocean eastward, in what was the first Japanese diplomatic

mission to the Western world.

Both missions prove the courage and boldness of Spanish and Japanese sailors in what can be called the first globalization attempts in history.

Our bilateral relations have developed enormously since then, and we will celebrate next year the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

We are improving our friendly and cooperative relations every day. This year marked an important milestone with the state visit of Their Majesties King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia of Spain to Japan in April, on the invitation of Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.

This was an important opportunity to reaffirm the mutual appreciation and respect between our Imperial and Royal families, our governments and our people.

On this occasion, new agreements were signed between Japan and Spain in the fields of cooperation in tourism, sports, economy and industry, medical research, as well as the promotion of exchanges of students and young diplomats.

Today, the framework of our relations is the "Japan-Spain Association for Peace, Growth and Innovation" that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Mariano



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko welcome King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia at the Imperial Palace during a state visit on April 5. CASA REAL

Rajoy signed in Tokyo in October 2013.

Through it, Japan and Spain cooperate in the U.N. and other international organizations to promote peace and global security, respect for human rights and international law, democracy and free trade.

On a bilateral level, we are making continuous progress in the deepening of our relations.

Our bilateral trade is steadily growing. In 2016, it reached a record total of ¥785.8 billion, a rise of 6.2 percent compared to 2015.

We are pleased to see new investment by Japanese companies in Spain. They show renewed confidence in our economy, after we have completed a long road of fiscal consolidation and structural reforms, which have put Spain's economy again on a solid path of growth.

In the tourism sector, the number of visitors is increasing significantly as well.

We are most pleased to see the interest of Japanese tourists in Spain, as tourist numbers reached 582,213 in 2016.

The number of Spanish tourists to Japan is growing as well, with 91,849 visitors in 2016.

These figures show the growing importance of our relations and the very positive

trend under our "Association for Peace, Growth and Innovation."

In the upcoming weeks and months, we will continue promoting these exchanges through the Japan-Spain Symposium, which will meet in Malaga from Oct. 18 to 20, the Bilateral Business Committee and the recently created Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

Additionally, in 2018 we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Spain.

This will be the occasion to present a relevant cultural program, which will start with a magnificent exhibition on "Velazquez and the Golden Age at the Prado Museum," that will be exhibited from February in Tokyo and later in Kobe.

During the rest of the year, the program will be completed with several exhibitions, concerts and other artistic performances.

We will also continue promoting the knowledge of the Spanish language — the

**AVE, a high-speed train operated by state-owned Renfe** TURESPANA



An exhibition gallery at the renowned Prado Museum in central Madrid TURESPANA



language of more than 570 million people all over the world — through the programs of the Instituto Cervantes in Tokyo.

I would finally like to recognize the excellent cooperation that we continuously receive from our Honorary Consulates in Sapporo, Nagoya, Osaka, Takamatsu and Fukuoka, in promoting Japan-Spain relations and supporting the Spanish communities in their respective jurisdictions.

Japan is an important and respected

partner for Spain. We will continue exploring ways and opportunities for strengthening our friendship, and expanding our bilateral cooperation in new areas to further consolidate our relationship.

I wish to deeply thank The Japan Times for publishing this message and I renew our commitment to serve the Spanish community in Japan and the interests of our bilateral relations for the benefit of our nations and our people.



The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia TURESPANA



Sagrada Familia, designed by Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi, in Barcelona TURESPANA

## Further development of friendly relations

**MASAMI TAKEMOTO**  
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-SPAIN FOUNDATION

On behalf of the Japan-Spain Foundation, I'd like to offer my congratulations on the National Day of Spain.



As is well known, Japan and Spain boast a long history of friendship spanning 468 years, dating back to the arrival of Francis Xavier in Japan in 1549. In addition, the two countries will mark the 150th anniversary of diplomatic ties next year since the establishment of such relations in 1868.

We're pleased that an amicable relationship has developed in a wide range of areas over the years, including close exchanges between the Imperial and Royal families.

In April this year, King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia paid their first state visit since his coronation. Such close contacts have formed the basis of the bilateral friendship and goodwill. The remarks by the king during the banquet at the Imperial Palace made us Japanese very happy. I'd like to repeat some of them here, as the king said: "I would like to take this particularly special opportunity to express our own personal affection and admiration for Your Majesties. You are an unwavering example of service to your people and a personification of the esteem in which your country is held around the world."

The Japan-Spain Foundation is celebrating the 60th anniversary since its establishment, during which time we have worked on developing closer ties with Spain and Spanish-speaking countries in a variety of areas, promoting a host of programs to boost friendly relations. We organize Span-

ish language and culture proficiency exams every year. The foundation also holds a Spanish speech contest in the presence of Princess Takamado, who is the foundation's honorary president. The contest serves as an incentive for young people who are studying the language. Furthermore, we have conducted consultations on studying abroad, the Spanish music competition, presented the Yu Aida translation award and held a number of lectures and events in various fields such as politics, economy, literature, painting and music among others.

I'm convinced that Japan-Spain relations will further develop through taking advantage of next year's 150th anniversary of diplomatic ties. Taking the opportunity to mark our foundation's 60th anniversary as a fresh start, we're determined to make progress in a wide range of activities for further development of the bilateral ties.



Casa de España (4-5-18 Shiba, Minato Ward, Tokyo) is the center of Spanish culture in Japan. JAPAN-SPAIN FOUNDATION

**Congratulations**  
on the Occasion of  
the National Day of Spain

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