

Ecuador National Day Special

Stronger relations await advances on trade

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AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR



This year, we commemorate the 215th anniversary of Ecuador's Independence Day and 106 years of diplomatic relations with Japan. We also celebrate 46 years since Quito was recognized as the first

Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO and the Galapagos Islands as a Natural Heritage of Humanity.

Japan is a strategic partner of Ecuador, we are neighbors on the Pacific rim and we have many cultural, gastronomic, geographical and natural affinities. Ecuador's oldest pottery from the Valdivia culture, dating from 2,000 to 3,000 years before our era, seems to have received, according to scientific studies, trans-Pacific influence from the Jomon culture.

Regarding the millenary history of our countries, Ecuador is proud to be the cradle of cacao more than 5,000 years ago. In fact, scientific studies by the University of Calgary determined that the oldest evidence of cacao domestication in the world was found in several ceramic vessels from the Mayo-Chinchipe culture, which was in the southern Amazon area of Ecuador.

Thousands of years later, we are proud that the Japanese chocolate industry uses our product. Ecuador is the world's third-largest producer of cacao and the world's largest producer of fine aroma cacao. Replicas of the ancient vessels containing samples of Ecuadorian millenary cacao have been

donated to the Bizen Latin America Museum and the University of Tokyo Museum. We hope to continue spreading this great discovery among the Japanese public.

Ecuador's trade balance with Japan has significant growth potential. Trade exchanges between the countries barely reach an average of \$500 million per year. Ecuador's main export to Japan is shrimp, followed by frozen broccoli, bananas, cacao and flowers — another sector in which Ecuador is one of the world's main exporters. Opportunities for expansion exist in palm heart derivatives, exotic fruits, tuna and whitefish.

A bilateral agreement is essential for Ecuador's trade relationship with Japan to advance. The government of Ecuador, along with the private sector, will advocate to finally launch a round of negotiations and achieve a bilateral trade agreement. In the meantime, Ecuador seeks tariff reductions on emblematic products like bananas in Japan's Generalized System of Preferences. Currently, high tariffs limit Japanese from consuming the best bananas in the world.

Ecuador already has trade agreements with China and South Korea — Japan should not be an exception.

Strengthening the relationship between our countries also involves finalizing key agreements proposed to Japan. These include "open skies" agreements, working holidays and visa exemptions for ordinary passports. Additionally, there is an interest in advancing cooperative efforts on decarbonization.

Ecuador is eager to receive cooperation from Japan in several areas, including health care, environmental preservation, clean energy, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters and combatting illegal, unreported

and unregulated fishing. Ecuador believes that further collaboration could be promoted in areas such as security under Japan's Official Security Assistance Program, the fight against international organized crime, value chains, artificial intelligence, child malnutrition and aerospace. To enhance bilateral engagement, Ecuador has also proposed to Japan the implementation of a specific mechanism for cooperation consultations.

President Daniel Noboa has been exercising great leadership to overcome the wave of criminality that has been plaguing the country. These attacks by international organized crime against a country long regarded as an island of peace must be tackled with the support of the international community. As long as there is excessive consumption of illicit drugs, in addition to the intervention of these international mafias in human trafficking, illegal mining that destroys the environment and money laundering, it will be challenging to overcome this unequal combat that afflicts the entire world and from which no country can be exempt.

Ecuador and Japan have shared membership on the United Nations Security Council for two years. Together we have coordinated and exercised leadership on issues related to complex international situations. We agree on a world free of nuclear weapons, a free world order where the rule of law prevails, and on the promotion of democratic values, among others.

Ecuador attentively received Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean, an occasion for which he and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa called the year for our region. We hope this initiative will be formalized in concrete actions and cooperation measures.



The seventh Ecuador-Japan Policy Consultation, held on July 16 in Quito and led by the authorities of both foreign ministries, underscores our commitment to advancing the bilateral agenda and fostering closer cooperation between our countries.

Ecuador will continue to be a reliable and close partner of Japan, and together we will continue to promote freedom and democracy from both shores of the Pacific Ocean that ties us.



Far left: President Daniel Noboa poses with Foreign Minister Gabriela Sommerfeld. Left: Chagras (cattlemen) look out at the Andes mountains.

EMBASSY OF ECUADOR

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

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to the People of Ecuador on
the Anniversary of Their Independence

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