

Cuba liberation day

Sustained progress, growth present investment opportunities

José Fernández de Cossío
AMBASSADOR OF CUBA TO JAPAN

On Jan. 1, the National Day of Cuba, 50 years of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution will be marked, a date when the nation won its independence and sovereignty, beginning the deep transformation of the political, economic and social order, which has been sustained since then by the amplest of popular endorsement.



From its first moments to the present day, the revolutionary victory has faced open hostility from successive U.S. administrations. As a result, Cuba has been a victim of all types of aggression, including a fierce economic blockade applied extraterritorially for almost 50 years that has been condemned repeatedly and by overwhelming majority in the United Nations.

All those actions violate international right and the fundamental norms of coexistence among nations, and have the declared purpose of destroying the revolution and producing a regime change, thus leading the country back to the condition of a dependent state with limited sovereignty.

President Raul Castro has publicly reiterated his readiness to enter into a dialogue with the government of the United States, conducive to the solution of the dispute, without preconditions, on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

The foreign policy of Cuba, based on the principles and observant of the postulates of the United Nations Charter, has won recognition and prestige in the international arena. As a result and for the second time, Cuba holds the presidency of the Nonaligned Movement, the most numerous grouping of states members of the United Nations. Also, and by its active work in the U.N. system and its agencies, it has received ample support to occupy different functions in the system.

Cuba maintains diplomatic relations with 186 states and has established embassies in 123 countries. There are 108 diplomatic missions in Havana.

In 2008, my country was incorporated into the Rio Group, in which all the nations of Latin America are represented. In the same year, Cuba and the European Union normalized relations.

The social achievements of the revolution, particularly in the fields of health, education and sports, are recognized beyond our national borders. At

present, in expression of solidarity with other peoples, 38,148 Cuban doctors and health-care specialists work in 73 countries and two overseas territories.

At an early date, the revolutionary power eliminated the prevailing illiteracy and established the bases to make free universal education at different levels readily accessible to the people. Cuban teachers extend their cooperation to other countries, where the Cuban method of alphabetization, "Yo si puedo," officially recognized by UNESCO, has benefited hundreds of thousands of people.

The vast and important transformation in the field of education enabled the creation of a series of research and development centers that contribute decisively to the



Cuban President Raul Castro

scientific and technological progress of the country. The triumphs of Cuban athletes at the great international sports events are indicators of the right sports policies, which en-

courage and bring about massive participation of citizens of all ages.

In the Japanese market, my country acquires products of high quality and sophisticated technology for the national health system. Prestigious Japanese companies, at different moments, have provided equipment for the construction, mining and fishing industries, and they are also present in the automotive and transport fields, and in the power-generation sector.

Cuba extracts inside its territory almost one half of the petroleum and gas that it consumes, having in addition in its exclusive maritime zone within the Gulf of Mexico, verified reserves of 9 billion barrels of petroleum and 630 billion cubic meters of natural gas.

My government would like Japanese enterprises in the sector to participate in contracts for the exploitation of the said resources in the same way as oil companies of other countries do.

The national pharmaceutical industry has been gaining prestige and increasing importance as one of the major export areas of the country, including, together with generic drugs, new medicines obtained by means of biotechnology such as vaccines against hepatitis B and meningitis, and also drugs to treat certain types of carcinomas. This is a sector where opportunities for Japanese companies exist.

Traditionally, Cuba exports to Japan world-famous cigars, rum of reputed quality, coffee, lobsters and organic agricultural produce whose presence

in the international market is progressively increasing.

Tourism constitutes one of the pillars of the national economy and Cuba receives over 2 million travelers annually. This figure has grown by over 4.5 percent annually for the last five years. Visitors find in my country beautiful beaches of white sand; splendid tropical nature and moderate climate; cities declared as World Heritage sites; and vigorous and diverse cultural and sporting events.

In particular, tourists receive the joyous hospitality of people who live in an atmosphere of environmental health and security, all of which constitute a very attractive destination. The participation of Japanese investors and tourism companies in the relevant fields is welcome.

In 2009, we mark the 80th anniversary of the establish-

ment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and Japan, an event in which we celebrate the bonds that have developed in a framework of friendship, respect and mutual benefit.

The commemoration of that important event must serve to stimulate action on both sides in different spheres like culture, academia, science, business and sports, as well as parliamentary interchanges. All these efforts will expand reciprocal knowledge, and deepen and broaden the existing good bilateral relations. It is equally a good opportunity to identify common themes and areas in the global agenda on which we can work together for a better world.

I would like to express the greatest appreciation and respect for the consistent and renewed expressions of solidarity rendered throughout

time by friendship organizations, members of Parliament and political parties of Japan, as well as of other sectors of society.

Especially, I would like to extend my gratitude to the government of Japan, the Japanese Red Cross, and to organizations and friends who have contributed to the reconstruction efforts made by the Cuban people to recover from the enormous damage inflicted by the three powerful hurricanes that hit extensive areas of the national territory in the space of 50 days.

On this remarkable occasion, and on behalf of the Cuban people and government, I would like to convey to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko my sincere and wholehearted greetings, and the expression of best wishes for the new year.

I also extend my warmest feelings to members of the Imperial family, and the government and people of Japan.

Parliamentary ties stimulate bilateral successes

Keiji Furuya
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-CUBA
PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE OF FRIENDSHIP

As president of the Japan-Cuba Parliamentary League of Friendship, I would like to extend my most cordial and friendly greetings to the people and government of Cuba on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.



It is with great satisfaction that I appreciate the positive development of bilateral parliamentary relations between the two nations. We are sure that the results of these contacts and exchanges have helped successes in the fields of health, education and sport, and in general, the economic and social progress of Cuba.

Cuba's altruistic medical cooperation is well known around the world, with more than

30,000 health-care workers extending assistance to 73 developing countries.

I am glad to emphasize that the Japanese Parliament continues to maintain the position of successive governments of my country on the sovereignty of international law, and that it voted to support the U.N. resolution: "Necessity of Putting An End to the Economic, Commercial and Financial Blockade Imposed by the United States of America Against Cuba," which the General Assembly approves annually with an overwhelming majority.

This year sees the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Cuba, which encourages both parties to hold events that will help to emphasize the good links between the respective parliaments as well as other activities of common interest.

I believe it is beneficial that Japanese and Cuban tourist firms are taking the initiative to

increase the number of visitors from my country to Cuba. Japanese tourists can enjoy the natural beauties of the island as well as its vigorous culture, come to know its cities' colonial architecture, some of which has been designated as Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, and in particular enjoy the warm hospitality of the Cuban people.

We were encouraged by the news in 2008 that the Cuban economy grew by over 4 percent in spite of the complex international economic and financial climate, and furthermore, the particular and difficult circumstances in which Cuba has had to develop its economic model.

In 2008, the financial institutions of Japan and Cuba have worked seriously and dedicatedly to reach realistic solutions to the problems emerging under these circumstances.

We know that Cuba is interested in the participation of Japanese firms in joint

ventures to explore for and extract petroleum, and in mining as well as investment in the tourism sector, and in other sectors where Japanese enterprises are known and highly appreciated for their prestige, quality of products and technologies. The parliamentary league highly appreciates this interest and encourages the Japanese business sector to consider these opportunities.

I would like to express my great recognition to the work done by the Japan-Cuba Economic Conference, which has played a fundamental role in business promotion among the enterprises of both countries for dozens of years.

In the name of the Japan-Cuba Parliamentary League of Friendship, I sincerely send my special greetings to President Raul Castro, the Cuban Parliament and President Ricardo Alarcon, as well as to the Cuba-Japan Friendship Group led there by Dr. Carlos Gutierrez.

Tomoyoshi Kondo
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-CUBA ECONOMIC
CONFERENCE

It is regrettable that in 2008 after Raul Castro assumed the position of president of the Council of State of Cuba, the economy momentarily worsened. It is known that the causes are completely external: the sudden rise of prices of international commodities, like grain and petroleum; the sudden fall of the prices of nickel, which is the main export item for Cuba; and the reduction of credits caused by the worldwide financial crisis. To make matters worse, three hurricanes hit Cuba in 2008, which destroyed homes, farm products and power sup-



ply facilities. However, I believe the Cuban nation can work together to overcome these difficulties.

Our Japan-Cuba Economic Conference dispatched a mission to Cuba at the beginning of September. We held dialogue with senior Cuban officials and deepened our mutual understanding. We are pleased to have played an important role so that the negotiations on short-term debt rescheduling were started, which was inevitable because of the Cuban situation mentioned above. As a result, a final agreement was reached to open the way to restart Japanese exports.

I am very happy to hear that the minister of state, Ricardo Cabrisas, after working for years as president of the Cuba-Japan Economic Conference, was promoted to vice president of the Council of Ministers in

the middle of October. One of his recognized accomplishments in the field of international economics should be the strengthening of the relationship with our Japanese side of the conference. At the same time, the minister of foreign trade, Raul de la Nuez, was designated as the new president of the Cuban side. I am sure that the conference's new Cuban president will play an active role in reinforcing bilateral economic relations in the future.

2009 marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Cuba. While bilateral relations between the two countries become stronger, as the Japan-Cuba Economic Conference we are prepared to make more efforts to strengthen the commercial relationship between both countries.



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on the 50th National Liberation Day
of the Republic of Cuba*

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