

Colombia independence day

Future shines bright on bicentennial

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AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA

On the occasion of the celebration of the bicentennial of Colombia's Independence Day, on behalf of President Alvaro Uribe and the people of Colombia, I extend our greetings to Their Imperial Majesties the Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial Family, Prime Minister Naoto Kan, the members of the government and the people of Japan. To commemorate 200 years of independence is not only an occasion to remember the emblematic history that Colombia has had to go through to be the prosperous nation that it is nowadays but an excellent moment to look toward the future.



Over the past eight years Colombia has undergone a very positive transformation. Those changes have not only been perceived by Colombians but by opinion leaders, the international community and relevant media around the world.

Such an outstanding transformation has been possible due to the strong commitment of President Uribe to regain trust and confidence in Colombia through the implementation of a very consistent security policy. As a consequence of the well-known improvements in security indicators, private investment has gotten a new impulse and its solid presence has made a positive impact in the economic growth of the country. Social development has also been a crucial element of the policy of democratic security. Thus, taxes have been focused on social investment, which has re-

sulted in the improved social well-being of Colombians.

In other words, Colombia has been able to start walking over a new path of prosperity.

Such changes have also been reported by relevant publications. In March 2007, The Economist did not hesitate to call the advances in terms of security as "The Uribe Effect." In September 2009, Newsweek labeled Uribe as "a transformer," referring to him as one of the world leaders that radically remade his country. In April 2010, a special edition of the Financial Times dedicated to new investment opportunities in Colombia described Uribe as "the Savior." And just a few weeks ago, The New York Times recommended Colombia as one of the "hot spots" for 2010.

What the international media and opinion leaders think is strictly based upon facts.

Colombia, the fourth-largest economy and third-largest population in Latin America, has been ranked by the World Bank in the 2010 Doing Business Report as the most business-friendly country in Latin America and the one that best protects investors.

The strategic location of the country, its stable democracy and its liberalization policy, make it an excellent place to trade and a secure investment destination. Colombia can guarantee preferential access to markets that extend to more than 1.2 billion consumers. Because of this, exports have increased very rapidly in the period 2002-2009, going from almost \$12 billion in 2002 to close to \$33 billion in 2009.

It also enjoys an improved business environment. During the past five years, the Colombian economy grew by 4 percent each year. In 2009, Colombia's gross domestic



Modern city: Located 2,600 meters above sea level, the capital Bogota is home to many international firms. EMBASSY OF COLOMBIA

product (GDP) registered an increase of 0.4 percent, a positive growth during the global recession.

A favorable outlook toward investments can be also proved with facts: foreign direct investment (FDI) in Colombia has increased 237 percent in the last seven years, going from \$2.134 million in 2002 to \$7.201 million in 2009.

The vision the country has for 2010 is to be negotiating 24 International Investment Agreements with 39 countries and 21 Double Taxation Agreements with 22 countries.

Colombia, which has as one of its best assets its human capital, is the Latin American country with the highest labor force growth rate, as well as an important emphasis on customer satisfaction. On the other hand, Colombia has had the

second-largest availability of skilled labor as well as one of the most entrepreneurial managers in the region, a fact that has also attracted investments.

In the case of Japan, our relation could not be in a more dynamic state. Colombia and Japan are in an advanced stage of negotiation of a Bilateral Investment Agreement and have successfully started a Double Taxation Agreement negotiation.

Our governments have agreed on the pertinence of an Economic Partnership Agreement negotiation in the near future. All this has been possible thanks to the trust Japanese investors have in Colombia and in the continuous interest of both nations to enhance even more the bilateral relations.

In the presidential elections

that were held on June 20, Colombians voted for the continuity and stability of the current government by electing President Juan Manuel Santos.

President-elect Santos is proposing not only to maintain but to take to a better stage the security of the country by implementing a strategy that will fight poverty and will give more opportunities to all Colombians.

Everything that has been conquered by the current government will not only be continued but enhanced. The country's policies won't undermine the trust that the world has already given to Colombia.

In the context of the international year of biodiversity, Colombia is also proud to celebrate its 200 hundred years of independence by making a tribute to its incredible natural treasures, given the fact that 10 percent of the world's biodiversity is in its territory.

The commemoration of the bicentennial comes, then, with an excellent momentum for a diverse Colombia: The heritage of a successful government will mark the path for the future one and we will keep working with all our strength in consolidating our ties with Japan toward a brighter future for both of our nations.



Biodiversity: Home to 1,721 registered bird species, Colombia is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world.

Congratulations

to the People of the
Republic of Colombia
on the 200th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day

Mitsubishi Corporation

Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Colombia
on the 200th Anniversary of
Colombian Independence

MIZUHO

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