

Ecuador independence day

Diverse country constructs more inclusive society

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AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR

On Aug. 10, Ecuador commemorates 201 years of its independence. On this day of great importance for my country, as ambassador of Ecuador it is a privilege to greet the noble Japanese people and my fellow Ecuadorean compatriots living in Japan.



Ecuador, an Amazonian and Andean country, is a multiethnic and multicultural nation located in the center of the world. Its coasts are bordered by the Pacific Ocean, which not just surrounds the beautiful beaches but also promoted navigation, contact and commerce with Japan for over a century.

Ecuador traces its origins back to 20,000 B.C. The Quitus, Panzaleos, Puruaes, Saraguros and Canaris in the Sierra; the Huaoranis, Ashuar, Cofan, Siona-Secoya, Shiwiar, Zaparo and Tagaeri (this last one not ever contacted) in the Amazonia; and the Awa, Chachis, Cayapas, Tsachilas and Huancaivilcas on the Coast are the indigenous cultures that have been preserved for centuries.

Since the 16th century, immi-

gration from Spain, as well as from Africa and Asia, among others, have contributed to the formation and consolidation of the Ecuadorean multiethnic and multicultural society.

Nature has been generous to Ecuador. In just 256,370 sq. km, the territory houses a splendid biodiversity, one of the richest on the planet. In four geographic areas distributed in the Andean, Amazonic, Costean and Insular (Galapagos) regions, it contains a numerous and exotic display of native species and endemic fauna and flora. We find some of the highest mountains and volcanoes on Earth, such as Chimborazo (6,310 meters), Cotopaxi (5,897 meters),

Cayambe (5,790 meters), Antisana (5,758 meters), Altar (5,320 meters), Illiniza (5,248 meters), Tungurahua (5,023 meters) and Cayambe (4,944 meters). The glaciers and surrounding valleys are of extreme beauty, one of the reasons that the country interests and attracts tourists and scientists from all latitudes.

The cultural development of the pre-Columbian communities was amazing. Valdivia produced the first ceramic the Americas (3500 to 1800 B.C.), and the pottery techniques and aesthetics are notable in the Chorrera (1500 to 500 B.C.) and Jama Coaque (500 B.C. to A.D. 1531) cultures, while the metal-



President Rafael Correa

work was highly developed in La Tolita (600 B.C. to A.D. 400), which smelted platinum with technology not yet determined.

As a result of the mix of races and the cultural syncretism existing since the mid-16th century, and under indigenous, Spanish, Italian, Flemish, and Moorish influences, the city of Quito developed a wide, prolific artistic production. In these artistic and architectural movements, there is a harmonious combination of the American and the European, a phenomenon that put the Ecuadorean capital, together with the city of Krakow in Poland, as the first cities to be listed, in 1975, on UNESCO's list of World Heritages. Some years later the city of Cuenca, in the south of the country, received a similar distinction.

In the last few years, the na-

tional government presided by President Rafael Correa has promoted a deep change of the political system, supported by the citizens. In six occasions referendums and elections were held with the purpose of constructing a more democratic, inclusive, just, and fair society. A new constitution was approved by 63.93 percent of Ecuadoreans on Sept. 28, 2008. Representatives were elected to the National Assembly.

Ecuador maintains relations with most countries and through a citizen diplomacy for human development and an active participation in international and regional forums, promotes international integration as a mechanism of cooperation and solidarity as a mean of collectively achieving the "Sumak Kausai" (Quechua for "Good Living"). At the external level it promotes the progressive development of international laws, the strengthening of mechanisms for the peaceful solutions to controversies, and the acknowledgment and reduction of asymmetries between countries. Furthermore, it implores the establishment of a new international financial architecture and the reform of archaic political institutions such as the United Nations Security Council.

The political constitution consecrates Ecuador as a territory of peace, forbids the development and use of weapons of mass destruction and prohibits the existence of foreign military installations in its territory. In relation to the rights of immigrants and their families, the promotion of universal citizenship and the free movement of all persons around the world are basic elements of Ecuadorean foreign policy.

The government promotes the Yasuni-ITT Project — located in the national park with the same name that was declared by UNESCO as a part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves — of forgoing 846 million barrels of underground petroleum, 20 percent of the proved reserves of the country (equal to the emission of 407 tons of carbon dioxide). This is a contribution of Ecuador to the conservation of biodiversity, the mitigation of climate change and the promotion of an equitable and sustainable development of the country.

In the bilateral field, the relations between Ecuador and Japan have been mainly characterized by the political dialogue and the commercial exchange of machinery and other industrial products, such as petroleum, flowers, bananas, coffee,

cacao, fruits, juices and preserves, tuna and other marine products, among others. Even though the Japanese market actually represents only a marginal destination for Ecuadorean exports, it has an enormous potential for Ecuadorean products, especially from the agroindustries, which are being promoted by the Office of Commerce of the embassy, created last year.

Within the framework of the National Plan of Development for achieving human progress and good living, several sectors of mutual interest for both countries have been identified, such as energy, petroleum and telecommunications (the latter of great relevance due to the recent adoption in Ecuador of the Japanese/Brazilian digital system of television), which are of major potential for the public and private sectors of Japan. These sectors offer possibilities of investments for mutual bene-

fit. It is worthwhile to mention that an Ecuadorean company started this year to export software to Japan for the use of financial entities.

Finally, the existing Japanese nonreimbursable and technical cooperation could be expanded to new areas with high social impact, such as the humanitarian removal of land mines, the application of sciences and space technologies, the research of the oceans, aquaculture and sustainable fishing.

I reiterate my best wishes for the prosperity and good health to His Highness the Emperor Akihito, the Imperial Family, and the honorable government presided by H.E. Prime Minister Naoto Kan. I stress the decision of the national government of Ecuador and its diplomatic mission in Tokyo to strengthening even more the friendly relations and cooperation that happily exist between both nations.

**Congratulations
to the People of Ecuador
on Their 201st Independence Day**

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Sunbathing: An iguana endemic to the Galapagos Islands, a UNESCO World Heritage site, takes a break.