

Guatemalan president's visit

Celebrating 75 years of Japan ties

Alvaro Colom Caballeros
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
GUATEMALA

Japan and Guatemala hold friendship and collaborative relations that have gone beyond administrations and that, in my government, we

look for its strengthening and expansion. These efforts will be consolidated in a short visit during October to this beautiful, prosperous and booming nation.

During my stay in Japan we will commemorate 75 years of diplomatic relations

between Guatemala and Japan, which started on Feb. 20, 1935. We will also sign an important agreement to launch the large ZONAPAZ (Peace Zone) Road Improvement infrastructure project.

Japan is one of the principal cooperation partners of

Guatemala and was one of the first friendly nations who had offered its hand at times when our country has suffered from natural disasters such as the Pacaya volcano eruption and the Agatha storm that enormously affected our territory early this year.

The support Japan provides to our country in the form of various technical and financial cooperation projects, both loans and grants, is an invaluable component for the development of our people and our country as a whole.

Japan and its people have extended their hands to assist in our proposals and efforts to advance the Central American regional integration process, one that no doubt will provide space for economic growth and for the improvement of the regional position in regard to the international community.

My government has prioritized health and education,



Natural beauty: Lake Atitlan in the highlands of Guatemala is renowned as one of the most beautiful in the world. EMBASSY OF GUATEMALA

Historic similarities persist despite distance

Byron Rene Escobedo Menendez
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF
GUATEMALA

Since my appointment to the embassy in Japan in May 2008, I have received the instruction from the president of Guatemala to strengthen relations with the people and government of Japan, which is admired by Guatemalans in general, particularly by those who had benefited with the cooperation from a world power from afar.



President Alvaro Colom Caballeros, trusted me to represent him in this millenary land, which shares an extraordinary culture that resembles much of our Maya ancestors.

During the presentation of my diplomatic credentials to His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor Akihito reiterated his sympathy for the Maya culture and the historic similitude we share. Also, the Emperor expressed his deep knowledge and interest in the Maya worldview illustrated in the Popol Vuh, a sacred book of the Maya.

After more than two years, both Japanese and Guatemalan Ministries of Foreign Affairs agreed to organize this Working Visit to Japan led by the president of Guatemala, the foreign secretary and ministers of state, with the objective to celebrate the 75 years of diplomatic relations between our countries.

Guatemala is known in Japan for various reasons: its

millenarian culture, its tourist attractions, its excellent coffee and rum, plants and ornamental products. It is an image heightened by the more than 250 Guatemalans who have established permanently in this beautiful country and received and been treated as its own sons and daughters.

The visit of the president of Guatemala coincides with the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity held in Nagoya. It will be represented by a Guatemalan delegation made up of government and nongovernment representatives. In this regard, the government of Guatemala has formulated a national policy with the vision to contribute to the accomplishment of the



Maya civilization: Tikal National Park, which houses the famed limestone-stepped pyramid temples, is designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF GUATEMALA

U.N. Millennium Development Goals with the emphasis on poverty alleviation.

I am very proud to represent Guatemala in Japan, and to work in line with the foreign

policy traced by President Colom in this friendly and singular country. It is an honor to celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations with the presence of the Guatemalan chief of state.

Heartiest Welcome
to His Excellency Álvaro Colom Caballeros,
President of the Republic of Guatemala,
on the Occasion of His Official Working Visit to Japan

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President of Guatemala Alvaro Colom Caballeros

and it is in education where Japan's aid is mostly felt, particularly in the form of scholarships and especially through the I Love Math program. These efforts allow the youth to grow and offer Guatemalans knowledge to develop, all these thanks to Japan's cooperation.

This will be a historic visit since for the first time we will

transmit from Asia, from Japan, our weekly radio program "Presidential Bureau," in which we will inform Guatemala the results from our visit.

Finally, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to the people and government of Japan for the wholehearted support and friendship offered during the last 75 years.

Signing infrastructure agreement key to visit

From Oct. 20 to 23, the President of Guatemala Alvaro Colom Caballeros is in Japan on a working visit. In 2010, we celebrate 75 years of bilateral relations, which began on Feb. 20, 1935.

The agenda includes an audience with His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito and a meeting with Prime Minister

Naoto Kan. Also, President Colom will have meetings with business groups and individuals who work in strengthening the bilateral relations, among other activities.

During his stay on Japanese soil, President Colom will sign an important agreement through an exchange of letters for the ZONAPAZ (Peace

Short profile of President Colom

Alvaro Colom Caballeros was born on June 15, 1951, in Guatemala City. He is married to Sandra Torres de Colom and is the father of three children. Colom was an industrial engineer who graduated from the University of San Carlos of Guatemala.

His resume shows him as a conciliatory and hardworking person. He was a university professor and vice dean of the Faculty of Economics, Rafael Landivar University (Guatemala). He specialized in textiles and the clothing industry, promoting textile development projects in various regions in Guatemala.

He served as a production manager in several companies, as a business development consultant, a leader in the Chamber of Industry and a member of the Board of the Guatemalan Exporters Association.

As a public official, he served as deputy economy minister in 1991 and was responsible for the conception and design of social funds in Guatemala. As executive director of the National Peace Fund (FONAPAZ), he played a leading and active role in building peace.

During the internal armed conflict his initiative led to the establishment of 75 companies, through which were created 23,000 direct jobs and 100,000 indirect jobs.

From 1991 to 1997, he contributed to the return home of more than 30,000 refugee families settled in Mexico, laying the foundations for peace in the region — in Ixcán, the Ixil area, the department Quiché — the most affected areas of the internal armed conflict.

In 1999 he was the presidential candidate of the New Nation Alliance and after a three-month election campaign, he finished in third place. He founded the party National Unity of Hope in 2001 and was nominated by the party in 2003, finishing in second place. In the 2007 elections, he again participated as a candidate of National Unity of Hope and was elected president of the Republic of Guatemala.

Zone) Road Improvement Project.

Over the years, there has been established a strong link of technical and financial cooperation between the two countries that began in the mid-70s, with greater emphasis after Guatemala signed its Peace Accords in 1996.

Japan has a permanent co-

operation office in Guatemala through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which has supported the implementation of sustainable development projects by improving the living standards of the people in rural areas, poverty reduction and environmental management, among others.

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Takehige Ogawa
Honorary Consul of the Republic of Guatemala in Yokohama
and
Group Representative

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