

## Venezuela independence day

## Celebrating the nation's bicentennial independence

Seiko Ishikawa  
AMBASSADOR OF VENEZUELA

On the occasion of the bicentennial anniversary of the independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of our government and people, I am honored to convey our renewed commitment to the continued friendship between Venezuela and Japan. On this auspicious day, I would like to express our appreciation to The Japan Times for this opportunity to address its distinguished readers.

I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, to the Japanese government and its people for the terrible loss of lives and extraordinary damage caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and by the following tsunami and nuclear disaster this past March.

Immediately after the disaster, President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and government authorities sent their condolences and offered the necessary material and logistic means to support the rescue and reconstruction efforts in the area. The members of the National Assembly of Venezuela issued an agreement expressing solidarity to the people of Japan. Aware of the constraints of oil supplies in the affected region, our minister of energy and petroleum displayed Venezuela's readiness to send oil products to Japan. Moreover, 19 tons of supplies were transported to Japan by our national air carrier, Conviasa, crossing half the globe with more than 21 hours of flight time. Yet these were just a token of appreciation for the solidarity and friendship that Japan has always extended to our nation

and to the world. We pray and hope for the prompt recovery of the affected region and our embassy will continue to support and encourage the resilient and stoic people of Tohoku.

Two hundred years ago, on July 5, seven of the provinces belonging to the Captaincy General of Venezuela declared their independence from Spain and established the new Republic of Venezuela, based on the premises of the freedom and equality of all individuals. These precious legacies from our independence heroes, including those of our Homeland Father Simón Bolívar, are vital inspiration for the struggle for peace and harmony among nations, and serve as the basis to construct our progress and welfare.

The vision and dream of our forefathers, for the integration of Latin American and the Caribbean countries into a community of nations, is enacted in our constitution, to be promoted and encouraged. On this glorious year of the bicentennial of our independence, the statutes for the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) will be drafted in Caracas, with the participation of 33 countries. This will be the historic result of decades of resolve for deeper integration in the Americas.

Venezuela's international relations are governed by the principles of independence, equality between states, free self-determination and noninterference in their internal affairs, the peaceful resolution of international conflicts, cooperation, respect of human rights and solidarity among peoples in the struggle for their liberation and the welfare of humanity. The regional organizations advanced by Venezuela reflect upon these principles.

The Bolivarian Alliance for the People of our America



Metropolis: More than 3 million people live in Caracas, the capital and largest city of Venezuela. EMBASSY OF VENEZUELA

(ALBA) is a regional organization formally launched in 2004 and currently made up of eight countries in Latin America and the Caribbean representing over 70 million people. It serves as the platform for regional integration and cooperation, with special emphasis on solidarity and social justice. ALBA has launched and supported a number of initiatives to further its purpose in economic and energy integration, health and education and media and culture. At a 2009 summit, ALBA member states agreed to create a regional currency, the SUCRE (Unified System of Reciprocal Compensation Payments). The first transactions using the SUCRE took place in 2010.

Another fine example of regional integration has been PetroCaribe. This is a 14-country energy agreement launched in 2005 to help correct energy asymmetries in the region. Through the agreement, member-states, which have now increased to 18, receive oil directly from Venezuela at preferential financing rates. The agreement thus allows developing countries that need energy the proper access to it and the financing arrangement allows them to direct money to social development projects in their countries.

Invoking the historic example of our Liberator Simón Bolívar, to achieve the supreme objective of establishing a democratic and participatory society that

guarantees social justice and equality, we can witness today further consolidation of achievements, due to the continuous and steadfast action of the Bolivarian government:

During the September 2010 United Nations Millennium Development Goals summit, Venezuela presented its advances on the goals, reporting that dramatic increases in social spending and innovative social programs had pushed Venezuela closer to achieving all eight goals.

Venezuela reached its targets in a number of goals (five years ahead of schedule), including the reduction of poverty and hunger and the elimination of illiteracy, and will meet remain-

ing goals, such as universal access to education and a significant reduction of maternal mortality, by the 2015 deadline.

Venezuela's advances come as a consequence of the government's aggressive promotion of social development. From 1999 to 2009, for example, 60 percent of all government revenues have been destined to social programs aimed at tackling poverty, and improving education, health, housing and food security.

- Halving extreme poverty: In 2002, extreme poverty in Venezuela stood at 25 percent. By 2006, it had decreased to 12.5 percent, and in 2009 it reached 7.2 percent.
- Achieve full and productive

employment: Despite a global financial crisis, unemployment in Venezuela decreased from a high of 16.8 percent in 2003 to 7.5 percent in 2009.

- Halving hunger: The prevalence of undernutrition — a key aspect of hunger — has fallen dramatically in Venezuela. It stood at 21 percent from 1998-2000, and dropped to 6 percent in 2005-2007, a level considered "low" by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- Completion of primary schooling: During the academic years 1995-1996/2000-2001, 75 percent of students that entered the first grade completed their primary education. By 2003-2004/2008-2009, that number grew to 84 percent.
- Elimination of gender disparities in education: The level of parity between men and women in higher education in Venezuela has increased since 1994, when it stood at 0.99. As of 2009, it reached 1.46, indicating that more Venezuelan women are pursuing higher education.
- Reduction of under-five mortality: In 2008, the mortality rate for children under the age of 5 stood at 16.35 per 1,000 births, a 49 percent decrease from 1990. In the same time frame, the mortality rate for children under the age of 1 fell from 25.8 to 13.9 per 1,000 births.
- Reduction in maternal mortality: Venezuela's maternal mortality rate dropped from 68 per 1,000 births in 2002 to 56.8 per 1,000 births in 2007.
- Combat HIV/AIDS: In 2002, only 7,170 Venezuelans with HIV/AIDS received antiretroviral medication free of charge. By 2009, 32,302 patients received this medication free of charge. The government is continuously working on preventive campaigns to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Decline rate of tuberculosis infections: From 1990 to 2008, the rate of tuberculosis infec-

tions in Venezuela declined from 4.11 to 2.30 per 100,000 residents.

- Integration of sustainable development principles: The principles of environmental protection and sustainability are outlined both in Venezuelan laws and in the country's constitution. This integration has led to a considerable slowing down of the rate of deforestation since 1990.
- Protection of biological diversity: Since the mid-1990s, Venezuela has taken steps to protect marine and terrestrial biodiversity. From 2003-2008, for example, the percentage of protected marine and terrestrial areas stood at 66.24 percent of Venezuela's total area, an increase from the 65 percent from 1993 to 2002.
- Access to drinking water: The percentage of Venezuela's population with access to safe drinking water has increased from 80 percent in 1998 to 94 percent in 2008. Additionally, the collection of wastewater has expanded from 62 percent to 83 percent over the same period.
- Availability of new technologies: Venezuela has made great strides in making information and communications technologies widely available. From 2000 to 2009, the number of Venezuelans with landline telephones increased from 2,535,966 to 6,866,626, while the number of subscribers to mobile telephone services jumped from 5,447,172 to 29,625,388. In the same period, access to the Internet rose from 273,537 to 2,033,858.

Though Venezuela has formally been a democracy since 1958, the first election of President Chávez in 1998 and the writing and popular endorsement of the constitution of 1999 marked a new level of political engagement for the society as a whole. Since then, the country has seen not only an increase.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**

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## Common values help bilateral ties to flourish

Takeo Hiranuma  
JAPAN-VENEZUELA PARLIAMENTARY  
FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

On behalf of the Japan-Venezuela Parliamentary Friendship League, I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulations to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its people on the occasion of the bicentennial anniversary of their independence.



The support shown by Venezuela on the tragic events suffered in Japan in March reflects our long-standing friendship based on mutual solidarity and

a common destiny.

Furthermore, the determination to consolidate and deepen our multiple ties characterizes our intense bilateral relations.

In these last few years, we have multiplied our contacts at the highest level of government and business, deepening the exchanges in the energy, environment, naval engineering and technology sectors through the development of substantial on-going projects.

On this very special day of celebration for the government and people of Venezuela, I would like to highlight that we share common fundamental values that provide clear paths toward peace and prosperity.

Japan and Venezuela promote

international understanding, peace and cooperation, and work alongside each other by promoting human rights, social issues, environmental protection, nuclear disarmament and the reform of the United Nations Security Council.

We admire the great zeal by which the Venezuelan government and its people are striving to build a fairer society.

The Japan-Venezuela Parliamentary Friendship League is determined to deepen the close relationship between both nations, promoting an open political and economic dialogue.

I am convinced that there are multiple and substantial opportunities that we can expand upon in the near future.



Caribbean beauty: A pristine natural environment welcomes visitors at Morrocoy National Park in the northwest of Venezuela. EMBASSY OF VENEZUELA

## Mutual assistance gives rise to new cooperative links

Masateru Ito  
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-VENEZUELA  
SOCIETY

On behalf of the Japan-Venezuela Society, I extend my sincere congratulations to the government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the occasion of the bicentennial anniversary of the birth of Venezuela as a sovereign and independent nation.



The Great East Japan Earthquake, triggering a massive tsunami, that occurred on March 11 was, needless to say, Japan's worst natural disaster since

World War II. Soon after the catastrophe, the Venezuelan federal government and provincial governments, as well as a number of Venezuelan organizations, private companies and individuals, sent their condolences to the Japanese people and expressed their support and solidarity through donations and other means. The special flight of Venezuela's national airline carrying 19 tons of donation goods to Japan was the longest in Venezuelan history as it relates to an operation of aid transportation to an affected country. The Venezuelan National Assembly also expressed condolence and solidarity to the Japanese people and called on the whole world to aid Japan.

On behalf of the Japan-Venezuela Society, we avail ourselves of this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks for the sympathy and encouragement as well as invaluable assistance we have received from the government and people of Venezuela.

A few months before the Great East Japan Earthquake, Venezuela was affected by natural disasters — flooding and landslides caused by torrential downpours — that left a number of people dead and forced thousands from their homes. On that occasion the Japanese government extended emergency assistance to the victims of the disasters. We are very pleased to see that the mutual assistance provided by both

countries has given rise to a new relationship of cooperation between Japan and Venezuela.

In the economic field it is encouraging that there has been progress in the area of energy cooperation. In August last year the second plant at Metanol de Oriente, Metor, S.A., a Japanese-Venezuelan joint venture, started commercial production of methanol and it increases Metor's annual production capacity from 750,000 tons to 1.6 million tons. In February this year the third Meeting of the Steering Committee of Japan-Venezuela Energy Working Group was held with the visit of Tadahiro Matsushita, senior vice minister of economy, trade and industry, to Caracas. The cooperation agreements reached by the working groups contribute to deepen relations between the two countries.

In cultural and sports exchanges, the Japanese Cultural Festival in Caracas was held splendidly in February this

year celebrating its 20th anniversary. In addition to the traditional events there were others such as the demonstration of a biped robot, a concert presenting a new composition by Dai Fujikura and conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, and a friendship concert by Japanese and Venezuelan artists. Last year, the Women's Softball World Championship and the Women's Baseball World Cup were held in Venezuela with Japan finishing second in the former and winning the championship in the latter. It is indeed a pleasure to see that there is better understanding between the two nations, and through the efforts on both sides, the two nations are closer to each other.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our warmest felicitations on this historic day and to assure all our Venezuelan friends that the Japan-Venezuela Society will continue to contribute to the strengthening of our bilateral relationship.

## Working hard to deepen, expand economic relations

Yorihiko Kojima  
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-VENEZUELA ECONOMIC  
COMMITTEE, KEIDANREN

On behalf of the Japan-Venezuela Economic Committee of the Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to H.E. President Hugo Chávez and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as the nation celebrates its 200th anniversary of independence.

In this commemorative year for Venezuela, we have witnessed two incidents that further strengthen the ties between our two countries.

To begin with, in the immediate aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred on March 11, Japan received from President Chávez and the people of Venezuela very kind words of sympathy and relief goods, for which I would like to express my sincere appreciation on behalf of Japanese industry. The wholehearted support from Venezuela has greatly encouraged the regions and people affected by the disaster. The Japanese business community will do its best to contribute as much as possible toward the reconstruction of Japan, and at the same time

work to deepen and expand its economic relations with Venezuela.

Secondly, through successful investment from Japanese companies, Venezuela and Japan have started cooperation in exploiting oil and gas at the Orinoco Belt. This was based on the agreement made between President Chávez, during his visit to Japan in April 2009, and the government of Japan to further cooperate in areas such as oil and natural gas. Facing a new environment after the Great East Japan Earthquake, Japan is in need of reviewing its energy composition, and in the process, strengthening economic cooperation with Venezuela is more important than ever in areas related to energy and natural resources. Technological advances and soaring crude oil prices became a big push to utilize and develop natural resources and expand related industries in Venezuela.

Building on these experiences, we would like to strengthen and deepen our economic relations, and look forward to the continued support of President Chávez and the people of Venezuela.

In conclusion, on this auspicious occasion of Venezuela's 200th anniversary of independence, I would like to pray for the peace and prosperity of Venezuela and its people, and promise to work toward the further strengthening of economic ties between our two nations.



Native: An indigenous child from the Amazon rain forest. EMBASSY OF VENEZUELA

## Progressing in many ways as nation turns 200

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

in political participation at all levels of government and popular organization, but also the consolidation of a transparent and trustworthy electoral system. Since 1998 there have been 16 internationally monitored national elections, including a historic recall referendum in 2004. The September 2010 legislative elections saw the participation of 186 political parties and a turnout of 66 percent, a historic high for the country. In those elections, opposition parties won 65 seats, against 98 seats from President Chávez's political party.

The constitution of 1999 explicitly expanded many political and civil rights, allowing Venezuelans to become participants in their democratic process, instead of just being a passive audience.

As a result, according to the 2011 regional Latinobarómetro report — (Latinobarómetro is a nonprofit nongovernmental or-

ganization based in Santiago, Chile, and publishes an annual public opinion survey about the development of democracy and societies, that involves some 19,000 interviews in 18 Latin American countries, representing more than 400 million inhabitants) — 84 percent of Venezuelans said they support democracy, the highest number in the region. In 1996 and 1997, before the new constitution was enacted and President Chávez elected, it stood at 62 and 64 percent, respectively.

On the same report, when asked to rank how democratic their government was, with 1 being "Not Democratic" and 10 being "Totally Democratic", Venezuelans ranked their government 7.1. This ranking put Venezuela fourth in the region, tied with Chile and above the regional average of 6.5.

The report also shows that 52 percent of Venezuelans stated that the government's policies improved their lives, third

in the region behind only Uruguay and Chile. They also ranked their country highest in the region in terms of distribution of wealth, with 38 percent saying it was "Very Just" or "Just." The regional average was 21 percent. When asked whether they were satisfied with their lives, 84 percent of Venezuelans answered affirmatively, second only to Costa Rica in the region. Fifty-three percent of Venezuelans approved of President Chávez's government from 2002-2010, and 55 percent of Venezuela approved of President Chávez's tenure.

Amid the tragic events in Japan, there is a steadfast commitment by Venezuela and Japan to continue to expand, deepen and consolidate their bilateral relationship.

The third Meeting of the Steering Committee for Energy Cooperation took place in Venezuela on February, to further expand the cooperation on

projects in petrochemical, oil, gas, electricity, alternative energy, environment, and financing, including Japanese participation in the development of the Orinoco Oil Belt. Also, the third Technical Bilateral Committee for the implementation of the Japanese format for terrestrial digital television broadcasting, met in Caracas in May.

Last February, our national oil company PDVSA's subsidiary, PDV Marina, signed a deal with Itochu for the purchase of four Japanese Aframax oil tankers amounting to \$306.5 million. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) will provide buyers' credit to finance the operation and the four Aframax built by Sumitomo Heavy Industries Marine & Engineering Co. This transaction marks 30 years since the last agreement of this kind with Japan and the first in the last 18 years for PDV Marina.

At the end of June, four Japanese trading houses and the JBIC signed a loan agreement with PDVSA for \$1.5 billion in

return for supplies of 3 million barrels of crude annually over a five-year period. This supply will contribute to the energy security of Japan amid the increasing demand of fuel for electricity generation following the earthquake and tsunami. The loans are earmarked for the modernization of two important refineries in Venezuela.

In August last year, Mitsubishi Corp. and Mitsubishi Gas Chemical inaugurated Metor II, the expansion project of the successful Metor plant in the east of Venezuela, with an investment exceeding \$500 million, doubling its production capacity of methanol to 1.5 million tons and further adding value to our primary products.

The Embassy of Venezuela will continue encouraging the swift recovery of the affected areas of Tohoku and help in any way possible for the resumption of the activities in the bilateral relationship, including the annual cultural events that will take place on this bicentennial anniversary of the birth of our nation.

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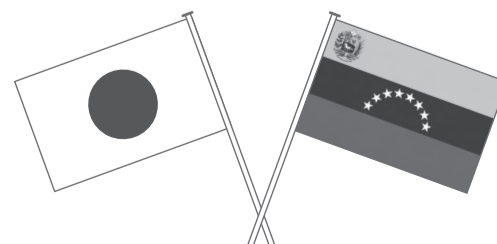
  
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