

Ecuador independence day

Strengthening cooperation, friendly relations for Pacific partners

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AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR



On Aug. 10, 2011, Ecuador commemorates 202 years of its independence. On this special day for my country, as ambassador of Ecuador it is a privilege to greet the noble Japanese people and my fellow Ecuadorian 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 only cradles 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. Since the 16th century, the immigration from Spain, as well as from Africa and Asia, among others, have

contributed to the formation and consolidation of the Ecuadorian multiethnic and multicultural society.

Nature has been generous with Ecuador. In just 256,370 sq. km, the territory lodges a splendid biodiversity, one of the richest on the planet. In four geographic areas distributed in the Sierra, Amazon, Coast and Insular (Galápagos) regions, it contains a numerous and exotic display of native species and endemic fauna and flora. Glaciers, mountains and surrounding valleys are of extreme beauty, being the reason why the country interests and attracts tourists and scientists from all latitudes.

The cultural development of the pre-Columbian communities was astonishing. The Valdivia produced the first ceramics of America (3500-1800 B.C.), and the pottery techniques and aesthetics are notable in the Chorrera (1500-500 B.C.) and Jama Coaque (500 B.C.-A.D. 1531) cultures, while the metalwork was highly developed in La Tolita (600 B.C.-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 Ecuadorian capital together with the city of Krakow, Poland, in 1975 as the first cities to be listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Some years later, the city of Cuenca, in the south of the country, received a similar distinction. Last February in Shinjuku, we organized an exhibition on Quito and Cuenca, which was visited by many Japanese friends.

Ecuador maintains relations with most countries and through a citizen diplomacy for human development and an active participation in international and regional forums, promoting international integration as a mechanism of cooperation and solidarity as a mean of collectively achieving the "sumak kausai," a Quechua term for "good living."

The political constitution, approved through the initiative of President Rafael Correa, 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 the immigrants and their families, the promotion of the universal citizenship and the free movement of all persons around the world are basic elements of Ecuadorian foreign policy. For The Yasuní-ITT Project — located in the national park of the same name that was declared by UNESCO as a part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves — the government is promoting a project to forgo 846 million barrels of underground petroleum, 20 per-

cent of the proved reserves of the country (equaling the emission of 407 tons of carbon dioxide). This is a contribution by 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, Manila hemp, fruits, juices and fruit conserves, fish flour, tuna and sea products, among others.

In addition to that, Ecuador and Japan share much more in terms of geographical composition and natural phenomena. Both countries are volcanic; it's simply outstanding how similar Mount Fuji and the Ecuadorian Cotopaxi Mountain are. On the other hand, the two countries have a seismic background that

has been enhanced by the natural disasters they have both experienced. Not only that, but there is also coincidence in the effects of El Niño, volcanic eruptions, among others.

Besides this, nature has given a special gift to both countries and it is something our people highly enjoy: "onsen" (natural hot springs). People all over Ecuador, and foreigners as well, visit them not only for touristic purposes but also for health matters. Natural hot springs are believed to have healing powers.

For Ecuador and its people, solidarity is one of the main characteristics and this is exactly what we wanted to show to Japan after the earthquake of March 11. Many demonstrations of sympathy were carried out by Ecuadorians inside and outside the national territory. Donations from private institutions, as well as citizens privately, were channeled mainly through the Ecuadorian Red Cross. The members of my embassy traveled on two occasions to the areas affected

by the tsunami to express our solidarity and friendship. As part of our National Plan of Development for achieving human progress and "good living," we look to the future with Japan, hand in hand. In this context, cooperation is a key issue and we believe we still have plenty to do. The two countries have recognized that the fight against poverty is a priority in our internal agendas, and it is important to mention that we are putting our efforts together to achieve this goal. In addition to that, renewable energies and natural disaster prevention are other areas of mutual interest; these top-

ics take particular importance after the events of March and we are hoping to learn from Japan and apply these lessons to our national plan.

I reiterate my best wishes for the prosperity and good health to His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito, the Imperial Family and the honorable Japanese 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 strengthen even more the friendly relations and cooperation that happily exist between both nations.

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**Congratulations
to the People of Ecuador
on Their 202nd Independence Day**

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