

Uruguay independence day

Celebrating 200 years since start of independent path

Ana Maria Estevez
AMBASSADOR OF URUGUAY

Today, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay celebrates the 186th anniversary of its independence. On this important occasion, I am honored to extend, on behalf of President Jose Mujica and the people of Uruguay, warm and respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the government and the people of Japan. I am also pleased to extend my congratulations to my fellow Uruguayans working or studying in Japan.



Although the independence from "any other power on

Earth" for Uruguay occurred in the year 1825, the path to reach emancipation began in the year 1811, with the rebellion against the Spanish colonial authorities. The Cry of Asencio (February 1811) was the starting point. That is the reason why Uruguay decided to join this year the bicentennial of other Latin American countries' independence movements, with the celebration of the beginning of its own emancipation process.

The "bicentennial" commemorates the historic events that involve our national hero, patriot Jose G. Artigas, who led the nation's quest to become a democratic state.

Cherishing the past is a very strong tie that unites all the people of a nation. The Bicentennial Honor Commission is comprised of those who have

served before as presidents of Uruguay, no matter they belong to different political parties.

As a highlight of the commemoration, the country will hold a reenactment of the Exodus of the Oriental People, one of the historic moments that shaped the sense of nationality for Uruguayans.

This year also marks another important anniversary: the 90 years of diplomatic relations between Uruguay and Japan. To celebrate, our embassy has planned a concert featuring "candombe" (together with tango, candombe is a popular music of Uruguay declared by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage). Other celebrations include paintings and photo exhibitions to be held at the Cervantes Institute of Tokyo.

From the very beginning as a

state, Uruguay developed strong democratic institutions and has been singled out as one of the most solid democracies in South America. Its government is a presidential system, where elections take place every five years.

The protection of human rights and the aim of providing equal opportunities for every member of the society has been the flagship of the current government under President Mujica. Several measures have been adopted in order to bridge the social gap within society; among them, the policy toward gender equality has been a priority on the agenda. Although women have free access to education at all levels, there has been a small number of women participating in the decision making process of the central and local governments. To remedy this inequity,

a law introduced the gender quota for the parliament, the local governments and the boards of political parties. This gender quota establishes that, for every three candidates, one of them has to be of the opposite sex. While the law will be fully implemented by the elections of 2014, already in the past election in 2009 the number of women increased in the parliament, and, for the first time, there are three female governors in the local governments.

Uruguay is one of the smallest republics in South America, with a population of 3.4 million inhabitants. Its name, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, comes from the fact that the country stands on the eastern



History: Official logo of the "bicentennial" of Uruguay's path to independence

bank of the Uruguay River.

Uruguay is a developing country of medium income and high human development. In 2010, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was \$12,043 and the unemployment rate was 5.5 percent.

Regarding the bilateral relations with Japan, it is possible to further strengthen our already excellent political relations based

on respect for human rights, human security, promotion of peace, abolition of all nuclear weapons, and firm support of international laws and preservation of the environment.

Uruguay is interested in being able to continue expanding its trade with Japan. Last year, Uruguay imported approximately \$103 million worth of Japanese manufactured goods (tires, cars, auto parts, optical products) while Japan imported from Uruguay \$128 million in goods, mainly chemicals, wool and frozen fish. New Japanese companies are investing in Uruguay in the auto parts industry and plastic film production attracted by the business environment of Uruguay and its extended market to the other Mercosur countries.

Japan and Uruguay are working together on a project that

will enhance energy efficiency in the latter and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The project promotes the use of the photovoltaic solar energy system as a new source of clean energy. Uruguay received from Japan a donation worth ¥730 million.

I would like to mention the support of Japan for the issue of so-called samurai bonds for Uruguay this year, as well as the invitation granted to our minister of industry, energy and mining to come to Japan in September.

In closing, I would like to thank Takeo Kawamura, president of the Japan-Uruguay Parliamentary Friendship League, for his support and commitment to promoting mutual cooperation, and to former Ambassador Katsuhiko Tsunoda, president of the Japan-Uruguay Society, for playing an active role in the friendship of our two countries.

Deeply grateful for Uruguay's help, sympathy after disasters

Katsuhiko Tsunoda
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-URUGUAY SOCIETY

On the occasion of the 186th anniversary of the independence of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, I would like to extend my wholehearted congratulations as president of the Japan-Uruguay Society. Also, this is the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Uruguay. I would also like to express my sincere respect and affection for the government of President Jose Mujica and the people of Uruguay, including the about 130 who live in Japan. Moreover, I would like to express my heartfelt respect for the work of H.E. Ambassador of Uruguay to Japan Ana Maria Estevez.



This year has become an unforgettable one for Japan. The

Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11 left more than 20,000 victims, including the dead and the missing, with material damages estimated at more than ¥20 trillion. Not only the magnitude 9.0 earthquake but also the ensuing tsunamis that transformed the Pacific coast areas created this disaster. The accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant brought about radioactive contamination and continues to have a big influence on the daily life of the general public, including electricity shortages.

We are deeply grateful for the help and sympathy from countries around the world, international organizations and innumerable friends worldwide. The government and people of Uruguay have provided much spiritual and material support to Japan. On March 11, just after the earthquake, President Mujica personally visited our embassy in Montevideo and signed the book of condolences. On April 6, relief supplies in the form of ap-

proximately 2 tons of canned corned beef arrived at Narita airport from Uruguay and immediately after, Ambassador Estevez brought these materials to the devastated city of Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, in spite of many difficulties. Moreover, the Uruguayan government decided to donate half a million dollars to Japan. Meanwhile, the Uruguayan Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a charity concert for victims, the first of its kind after the earthquake. In gratitude, members of the Japan-Uruguay Society invited Ambassador Estevez to a luncheon called Gracias a Uruguay (Thanks to Uruguay) that we organized on May 9 in Tokyo.

Japan and Uruguay have enjoyed a good bilateral relationship since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1921. Ties include multilateral economic and cultural exchange, as well as economic and technical cooperation, including the dispatch of senior volunteers. Consultations are advancing af-

ter the decision of the Uruguayan government to adopt the Japanese digital TV system. Financing for a project for new, renewable energies and some investment projects are also progressing. Also, small-scale economic cooperation from the Japanese government in the areas of agriculture, education, medical care and social affairs are being realized. In cultural areas, the Kabuki Gate was opened on May 14 at the Japanese Garden in Montevideo, while several performances and exhibitions were held in both countries. In soccer, we may jointly celebrate "Nadeshiko" Japan's championship in the Women's World Cup and Uruguay's men's team's victory in the Copa America in July.

In conclusion, we sincerely hope that the bonds of friendship and cooperation between our countries will become stronger with each year and that the Japan-Uruguay Society may contribute to this strengthening in its own way, however small.

Congratulations

to the People of Uruguay

on the 186th Anniversary of

Their Independence Day

The Japan-Uruguay Society

President: Katsuhiko Tsunoda

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