

Colombia independence day

Successful accomplishments in bilateral ties with Japan

Patricia Cardenas
AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA

On the occasion of the commemoration of 202 years of Colombia's independence, on behalf of President Juan Manuel Santos and the people of Colombia, I extend our greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, the members of the government and the people of Japan.

After the difficult times of March 11, 2011, Japan has been able to demonstrate that this is a resilient nation with the capacity to rise again and become stronger even after the hardest

adversities.

It is with gladness that we observe the determination and perseverance in all recovery efforts and remain willing to become part of initiatives that contribute to this continuous process that will keep placing Japan in the outstanding position in the international order at which it has always been.

Commemorating the National Day is an opportunity to share with the readers of The Japan Times the vision Colombia is successfully accomplishing with the intention of consolidating its regional leadership, enhancing its ties with Japan and becoming a remarkable member of the Asia-Pacific context.

Colombia has been able to attain extraordinary achievements in the past years, which in addition to generating more growth have created an excellent envi-

ronment for investment, trade and tourism.

With the third largest population in Latin America and the 24th largest in the world, a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) that has doubled since 2004, one of the most skilled and competitive labor forces, the richness and trade opportunities of two oceans, 10 percent of the biodiversity of the planet and vast cultural traditions, Colombia is a dynamic country striving for new challenges and looking for opportunities to be more influential in today's globalized world.

In the case of the bilateral relations with Japan, the advances have been quite significant. In the framework of the visit of President Santos to Tokyo in September 2011, both nations signed an investment protection and promotion agreement (AP-



Strengthening ties: Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos meets with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Tokyo on Sept. 12 during his visit to Japan. CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

PRI), which is expected to greatly influence the presence of Japanese investments in Colombia.

In that very same occasion of

the presidential visit and during a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Noda, the creation of a Bilateral Study Group for an economic partnership agreement (EPA) was announced. This group, after three different meetings in both Bogota and Tokyo, is at the stage of developing suggestions in order to create the most pertinent manner to approach an agreement of

this kind. The initiation of negotiations of an EPA is one of the challenges that the diplomatic mission in Japan is aiming to complete in the near future.

In 2012, Colombia is also commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the National Coffee Federation in Japan. Coffee has been one of the main references of the country and keeps being our most important product in the trade balance with Japan.

Tourism is another area through which we are strengthening our ties with Japan. In cities and regions such as Bogota, Medellin, Cartagena, the Amazon and the "Coffee Triangle," Japanese visitors can enjoy city life, discover our history and experience marvelous landscapes and the richness of nature and traditions. Japan is for Colombia the most important market in terms of tourism in the Asian region, and we will keep making efforts to be more active in the promotion of our wonderful destinations.

In a more general approach, building a stronger relation with Asia has been part of a strategy

toward which the government has dedicated all efforts. Colombia has reiterated its intention to enter the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, in which our country has been granted participation in several working groups, as well as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Colombia is also looking forward to maintaining a leadership role within the forums in which it is already participating, such as the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), of which Colombia is the regional coordinator in the period 2012-2014.

The Pacific Alliance, an initiative that emerged in April last year and was ratified this June, will become a milestone of the committed joint effort that Latin American countries are willing to make to consolidate a much more dynamic, stable and long-lasting presence in Asia. Colombia, together with Chile, Mexico and Peru, are already paving the way of a new approach to enhance investment and trade relations with unified strength.

Besides the organizations and joint efforts to be part of the Asia-Pacific, Colombia has also envisioned the creation of a network of diplomatic missions and commercial offices in Asia to have a stronger and more active presence in the region. In the past year, the embassies of Indonesia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates were established. Colombia opened offices in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul, Istanbul, Singapore and Shanghai as well.

The current government of President Santos has clearly stated that one of the priorities of Colombia's International Policy is based on the insertion of the country in the Asia-Pacific, and in that firm ambition, we are convinced Japan is undoubtedly an excellent partner.

May this commemoration of the National Day be an occasion to reiterate the many efforts Colombia is undertaking to stand firm and strong in the regional and international context and to express the interest of taking Japanese ties to higher levels that bring outstanding mutual benefits for both nations.



Caribbean resort: Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984, Cartagena adds the charm of its colonial architecture to the attractions of cultural festivals and lush landscapes. PROEXPORT

Colombia and Japan: a long-standing partnership gains further momentum

Luis Genaro Muñoz
CEO, COLOMBIAN COFFEE GROWERS
FEDERATION (FNC); CHAIRMAN,
COLOMBIA-JAPAN ECONOMIC
COMMITTEE IN COLOMBIA

Japan has shown to the world how a country can recover from a great tragedy such as the earthquake and tsunami of March 2011 thanks to the resilience and discipline of its people. This is a great example for Colombia, a country that is firmly destined to reach its potential and that now is part of a select group of emerging markets with high economic growth, young and educated labor force, and a source of biodiversity and energy for the world.

Colombia has advanced in its

integration to the world economy and particularly to the Asia-Pacific region. In this regard, the relationship between Colombia and Japan is going through a great momentum after the visit of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos to Japan in September 2011.

Both countries already signed a bilateral investment treaty that will promote and enhance investment flows. Moreover, the study group for a possible economic partnership agreement (EPA) gave the green light to commence negotiations. During the last Japan-Colombia Joint Economic Committee Meeting, Japanese and Colombian business leaders urged both governments to start the EPA negotiations as soon as possible, since it will provide a permanent framework to promote trade in goods and services, taking advantage of the way both economies com-

plement each other.

I am positive that many other Colombian products will soon conquer the Japanese market in the same way as Colombian coffee has, given the endurance of our coffee growers and the decided work done by FNC, which is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its Tokyo office this year. In 1962, at a time when Japan was not yet a coffee consumer country and was reemerging as a significant economic player in the world arena, FNC made the decision to open its office in Tokyo to promote the consumption of Colombian coffee in Japan and Asia. The opening of the FNC's office in Japan proved to be a significant milestone in the relationship between Japan and Colombia, a country that was then perceived as exotic. Since then, both nations have developed a significant relationship and coffee has become a dominant fea-

ture in the economic ties.

Colombian coffee is now a symbol of Colombia for Japanese citizens and maintains an important position in the Japanese market. Furthermore, Japan is the third largest coffee importer in the world, and the second largest market for Colombian coffee, a position that demonstrates not only the strong relationship between the two countries, but also the importance of quality and long-standing relationships for the Japanese coffee industry and coffee enthusiasts.

The Colombian Coffee Growers Federation is proud to be a key part of the institutional representation in Japan and will continue to work closely with the Colombian government to take the bilateral relationship to its full potential in the years to come.

An increasingly important partner for Japan

Yorihiko Kojima
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-COLOMBIA
ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, KEIDANREN

On behalf of the Japan-Colombia Economic Committee of Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulations to H.E. President Juan Manuel Santos and the people of the Republic of Colombia on their 202nd anniversary of independence.

I would like to thank the people of the Republic of Colombia for their kindness in providing Japan with relief supplies immediately after Japan was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake last year. It was an occasion to confirm the unswerving,

amicable relationship between Japan and Colombia.

Under the strong leadership of President Santos, the Republic of Colombia has improved its public order and people's living standards, and its economy is growing steadily. While Latin America, as a region, continues to mark high economic growth, the Republic of Colombia in particular has enjoyed increased foreign direct investment over the years thanks to sound management of the economy and aggressive measures in attracting foreign investment and opening its market. The domestic market of Colombia, with a population of 45 million, second only to Brazil in all of South America, is an attractive destination for investment. And not only coffee, as typified by Supremo — which has become synonymous with high-quality coffee — but also

rich natural resources, such as oil, coal and ferronickel, make the country an increasingly important partner to Japan as an energy and resources supplier, I believe.

When President Santos visited Japan last September, top-level meetings between the Republic of Colombia and Japan took place and an agreement was reached to establish joint studies toward the Japan-Colombia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). With such initiatives in place, I am pleased to see that preparations for an early start of negotiations are under way. If an economic partnership agree-

ment is signed between the two countries, I am confident that we can expect the expansion of trade and investment between Japan and the Republic of Colombia will gain further momentum, which will contribute greatly toward the strengthening of relationships between our two economies. I strongly hope for an early commencement of negotiations.

Finally, may I once again offer the people of the Republic of Colombia my sincere congratulation on the occasion of their Independence Day, and pray for the further development of relationships between our two countries.

Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Colombia on the 202nd Anniversary of Their Independence



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