

Colombia independence day

A dynamic economic relation with Japan

Patricia Cardenas
AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA

On the occasion of the commemoration of 203 years of Colombia's independence, on behalf of President Juan Manuel Santos and the people of Colombia, I would like to extend our greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the members of the government and the people of Japan.

Colombia has become one of Latin America's largest economies and a gateway to global business in the region. This year, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow at an average rate of nearly 4 percent; public finances are sound and have demonstrated resilience in the wake of the international financial crisis. Foreign investment flows, economic diversification and tourism are increasing and Colombia is making significant progress in reducing poverty.

Colombia is joining the elite of global economies with the signing of trade agreements, which will allow preferential access to a market of over 1.5 billion consumers. The country accounts for 21 international investment agreements, the latest being the investment guarantee agreement signed with Singapore this past week, and has 16 double taxation agreements.

According to the World Bank's Doing Business Report 2013, Colombia holds sixth place in the

world, and first in the region, in the index for investor protection and has registered a rate of visitors which has risen by 72 percent over the past five years.

Japan and Colombia have engaged in a comprehensive bilateral agenda that has already registered tangible results and provides a promising outlook.

Forthwith, both countries are negotiating an economic partnership agreement (EPA), a scheme that is expected to further boost the potential of the exchanges between the economies by achieving greater diversification of products and services. The second round of negotiations was held in May and included issues in the areas of trade in goods, trade in services, rules of origin, customs procedures, intellectual property, competition, cooperation and improvement of the business environment.

In a related effort to consolidate relations with Japan, the government of Colombia signed the agreement for the liberalization, promotion and protection of investment (the Japan-Colombia Investment Agreement) in September 2011, in the framework of the visit of President Santos to Tokyo.

Accordingly, the visit to Colombia of Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Toshimitsu Motegi last April reaffirms the decided commitment of both countries to advance and reinforce the core elements and themes of the bilateral agenda.

The government of Colombia has engaged in an ample number of activities to promote the country as a touristic destina-

tion that offers various experiences: from the exotic jungle in the Amazon to the hidden history of the colonial times in the city of Cartagena; from the vibrant capital city of Bogota to the breathtaking landscapes of the region where the mildest coffee of the world emerges.

Promoting our destinations involves promoting our traditions. Colombian artists have come to Japan to captivate audiences with the unique sounds and energy of the country's music. The harp from the east of Colombia; the vividness of Chirimia, the typical band of the Pacific coast; and the cadence of the accordions of Valenato songs in the north, all have had a space in different stages of Japan and cultivated a curiosity to know more about our flourishing nation.

Colombia and Asia

Colombia is aware of the advances obtained as well as the challenges to face with the aim of consolidating a more respon-

sible and thriving society integrated with the rest of the world. One of the country's main priorities is to play an active part in Asia's regional architecture, being one of the instances the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, APEC, where Colombia has been actively participating in different working groups and attending relevant meetings.

Colombia has been invited to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, which is seen as a reflection of the country's transformation and a message in support of the tasks the nation has been undertaking. This will become a platform to establish a direct dialogue with the most advanced economies in the world, and therefore to exchange best practices and strategies for more globalized policies.

The Pacific Alliance, of which Colombia assumed the presidency pro tempore, contemplates to strengthen economic ties among Colombia, Chile, Mexico and

Peru with the nations of the immense Pacific basin.

While hosting a population of about 210 million people of Latin America and the Caribbean and 34 percent of its GDP, the group already accounts for half of intra-regional trade, 50 percent of regional trade with Asia and 42 percent of foreign direct investment in the region, according to the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Pacific Alliance, a newly-minded economic bloc, has a promising future, and it's seeded in fertile ground. These countries enjoy a buoyant economy, a vibrant and growing middle class, strong democracies and relatively low inflation rates.

Japan is currently an observer in the framework of the alliance, of which the most recent presidential summit was held in Cali in May, gathering eight presidents and a large number of business leaders. Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Kenta Wakabayashi took part in



Capital: Located 2,600 meters above sea level, Bogotá is the largest city in Colombia and home to many international firms. EMBASSY OF COLOMBIA

this important summit.

The alliance is committed to joining efforts for a more dynamic, stable and long-lasting joint presence in Asia and is already paving the way to a new approach to enhance investment and trade relations with unified strength.

Colombia is currently preparing to host the Meeting of the Joint Economic Committee of Keidanren next November in Bogota. This will be an important step to advance the extensive bilateral agenda and an effective way to promote the ample involvement of the business sector in both na-

tion's common objectives.

May this commemoration of the Independence Day be an occasion to express the keen interest of the government of Colombia to work toward the consolidation of outstanding mutual benefits in the bilateral agenda with Japan.

Further expanding economic relations through trade, investments

Yorihiko Kojima
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-COLOMBIA
ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, KEIDANREN

On behalf of the Japan-Colombia Economic Committee of Keidanren, I am delighted to extend my warmest congratulations to H.E. President Juan Manuel Santos and the people of the Republic of Colombia on the 203rd anniversary of independence.

I am certain that several important factors make Colombia more privileged and attractive than any other country. Its abundant energy, metals and food resources, its strategic geographic position, being bordered by both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans,

its large population (second only to Brazil within South America) with its appeal as a consumer market, and finally, the commitment and dedication of its people.

Colombia has been Japan's important friend over the years. And this relationship has been strengthened much more, thanks greatly to the strong leadership of President Santos. In recent years, under President Santos, Colombia has been experiencing significant improvements in its public security and in people's standard of living. And these facts have not only enabled the Colombian economy to enjoy steady growth but also encouraged foreign investments to jump into the market with much speed.

In May, the second round of negotiations for the economic

partnership agreement between Japan and Colombia was held in Cali, Colombia, which shows the significant progress of the bilateral economic relations. I am confident that the bilateral EPA, which is expected to be concluded by the end of this year, will contribute to the further expansion of trade and investments between our two countries.

Furthermore, the Pacific Alliance, which was launched in 2012 among Chile, Peru, Mexico and Colombia, gives us another good opportunity to approach these potential markets in Latin America. And in this alliance, Colombia plays an essential role, having assumed its presidency from this May. I have high expectations for this regional integration under the leadership of Colombia to expand free trade and to strengthen the economic

relationship with the Asia-Pacific region, where the economy is growing dynamically. As an observer country for this Pacific Alliance, Japan would like to further strengthen the economic and business cooperation with the region.

Finally, I would like to note that the eighth Colombia-Japan Business Committee meeting is going to be held this autumn in Bogota. It is our sincere hope that the meeting will provide the two countries with opportunities for productive exchanges on actual economic situations of both countries and bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

In closing, please allow me to once again offer my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of the Republic of Colombia on this important day.



Art and music: Built in 1911, the Heredia Theater in Cartagena features a ceiling decorated by renowned Colombian artist Enrique Grau. EMBASSY OF COLOMBIA



Legacy: Traditional hacienda houses are part of the coffee region landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage. EMBASSY OF COLOMBIA

Long-standing partnership gains higher level with EPA negotiation

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

Japan always surprises the world. After the successful recovery from the tragedy of March 2011, Japan has started to show signs of economic growth and optimistic perspectives for the future. In this juncture of a weak world economy, it is remarkable that the Japanese economy is helping to support the recovery.

This is a great example and opportunity for Colombia, a country that is firmly destined to reach its potential through high economic growth, young and educated labor force, and its condition as a source of biodiversity and energy to the world.

Recently, the long partnership between Japan and Colombia has reached a higher level thanks to the advances in the negotiation of an economic partnership agreement (EPA) between the two countries and the development of the Pacific Alliance mechanism of economic and trade integration among a group of

Latin American countries, with particular emphasis toward the Asia Pacific.

The Japan-Colombia Joint Economic Committee Meeting continues to be the best scenario to boost the entrepreneurial developments between the two countries. Later this year, in November, a new meeting will be held in Bogota.

I am positive that many Colombian products will soon conquer the Japanese market in the same way as Colombian coffee has done so for more than 50 years.

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.

Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Colombia on the 203rd Anniversary of Their Independence



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