

Cuba National Day

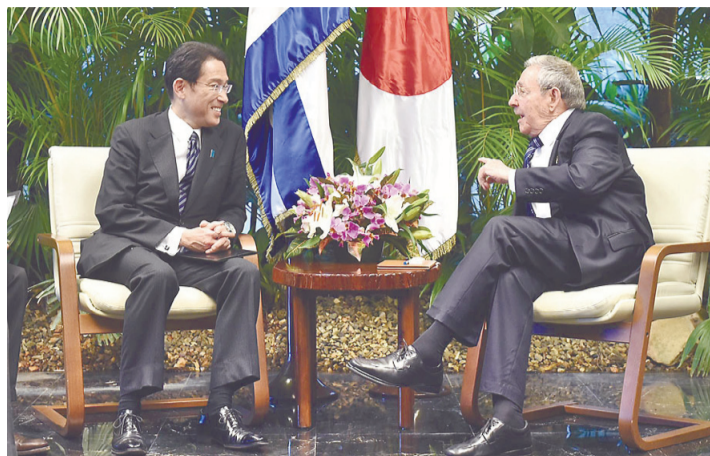
Relationships grow across all sectors

Marcos Rodriguez Costa
AMBASSADOR OF CUBA

On Jan. 1, the Republic of Cuba, on its National Day, celebrates the 57th anniversary of the triumph of the Revolution, a historical process in which the Cuban people finally won true independence after more than 100 years of struggle.

On this remarkable date, I am honored to express, on behalf of the Cuban people and government, our best wishes for peace, prosperity and friendship to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and other members of the Imperial family, as well as to the government and people of Japan, who are so close to the hearts of all Cubans. Cuba notes with satisfaction the progress achieved by the Japanese people in recovering from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami and renews its solidarity with the victims.

We happily confirm that during 2015 Cuba and Japan have significantly strengthened bilateral exchanges in all sectors. Maturity and diversity achieved in our relations are based on the mutual interests of both countries and are complemented by the natural sym-



Cuban President Raul Castro (right) speaks with Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in Havana on May 2. EMBASSY OF CUBA

pathy between Cubans and Japanese, allowing us to interact in a unique way.

Two visits in 2015 — one by the Vice President of the Council of Ministers of Cuba, Ricardo Cabrisas, to Japan and the other, a historic first visit to Cuba by a Japanese Foreign Minister, Fumio Kishida — marked the beginning of a qualitatively higher stage in our relations and showed the priority given by both countries to bilateral exchanges.

The most prestigious Japanese companies showed a renewed interest for the latest opportunities offered by the Cuban market. After a few years away, Japan was represented with a booth at the 2015 International Fair of Havana.

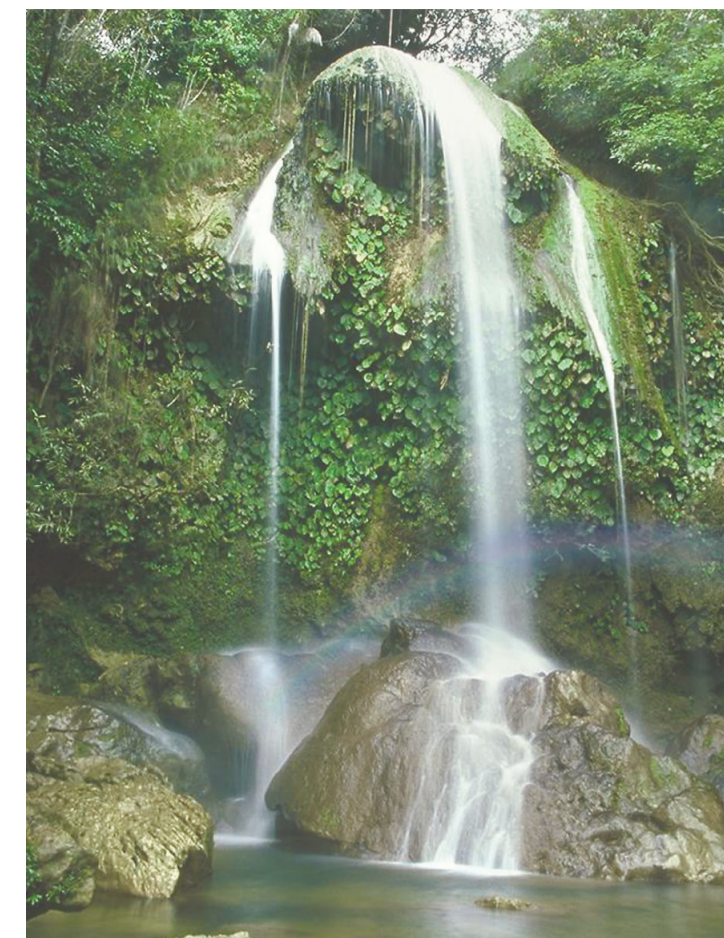
More than 400 foreign com-

panies, including many Japanese, have shown interest in investing in the Special Economic Development Zone of Mariel. This strategic location provides a unique opportunity for investors, who enjoy significant tax advantages. It occupies an important place in the portfolio of business opportunities that promotes our country, including 323 projects in the zone.

We aspire to seeing the high participation of Japanese companies in the investment process that Cuba promotes, especially in agribusiness, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, the automotive and transport industries, among others.

We aim to continue expanding Japanese tourism to our beautiful Caribbean island, where the exuberant nature, the unique architecture and world-renowned Cuban beaches await friends of this beautiful country. Tourists will find in Cuba an educated, cheerful and hospitable people that receive visitors with open arms.

Cuba continues to see im-



Clockwise from left: Cayo Santa Maria is an island off Cuba's north-central coast and is well known for its white sand beaches and luxurious all-inclusive resorts; The Castillo de San Pedro de la Roca, a fortress on the coast of Santiago de Cuba, is a UNESCO World Heritage site; Located just outside of Cienfuegos, the El Nicho Waterfalls are excellent examples of Cuba's natural wonders. EMBASSY OF CUBA

provement in its main economic indicators, showing the willingness and ability of our people and government to advance in the updating of our economic model to achieve a fair, prosperous and sustainable socialism. Domestic companies gained autonomy and more Cuban workers have registered as self-employed.

The restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S., the opening of embassies and the changes that President Barack Obama declared

on policy toward Cuba are progress recognized by Cuba and supported by the international community. However, the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba persists for more than half a century. This is the main obstacle to Cuba's economic development, as it also affects other nations due to its extra-territorial scope and continues to harm the interests of American citizens and companies.

The direct participation of the Cuban people in decision-making processes guarantees a broad consensus in Cuba, contributing to the achieve-

ment of social welfare and the accomplishment of the main objectives of the country.

Cuba continues to reap success in the international arena. The participation of Cuban President Raul Castro in the Summit of CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), the Summit of the Americas for the first time and the 70th Session of the U.N. General Assembly, showed the widespread recognition and international support for Cuba. There is also ongoing interest from world dignitaries interested in visiting Havana.

One of the most significant events in 2015 was the historic visit of His Holiness Pope Fran-

cis to Cuba, where he had the opportunity to receive profound displays of affection, respect and hospitality from the Cuban people.

Cuba continues to defend, in major international fora, the right to a world free of nuclear weapons and condemn categorically the practice of any kind of terrorism.

Tens of thousands of Cuban doctors continue saving lives in Latin America, Africa and the Pacific, under the banner of solidarity. Groups of highly specialized Cuban professionals fought the Ebola epidemic in three African countries, while an emergency medical team assisted earthquake victims in Nepal.

Finally, I want to express the esteem, respect and special consideration of Cuban people and its government for the consistent and renewed expressions of solidarity and friendship with Cuba, received from friendship organizations, Diet members, political parties and Japanese society as a whole over the years.

We are confident that this year, which happily starts today, will witness the continued strengthening of relations between Cuba and Japan in all fields and that the future of these relations will be as bright as the sun that shines in our countries, which are geographically distant, but very close in affection and friendship.

Congratulations
on the 57th National Day of the Republic of Cuba

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Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Cuba on the 57th Anniversary of Their National Day

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