

# Central America Independence Day

## Strong, free nations unite to celebrate independence

On Sept. 15th, the five countries of Central America commemorate their independence. On this important occasion, we offer our greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and reiterate our desire to deepen our long-term relationship with Japan.

Central America obtained its independence from the Kingdom of Spain 195 years ago, giving rise to the Central American Federation. From this, the current republics of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica were later founded.

Since independence, inspired by the fundamental principles of fraternity, harmony and sovereignty, we have built a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

Enriched by cultural, ethnic and natural diversity, our countries interact harmoniously with each other and the rest of the international community.

Great moments in Central America integration include the establishment of the Organization of Central American States in 1951 and the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration in 1961, aimed at establishing the Central American Common Market. The creation of these institutions marked the opening of Central American economies to policies for the regionalization of trade and investment; they also strengthened our bonds in other areas with the vision of comprehensive development for the region.

On this Independence Day, we celebrate that our integration process has provided a platform for the dialogue needed to collectively address major regional challenges such as poverty, inequality, citizen insecurity and



Representing the embassies of the five republics of Central America, (from left) Ambassador of Guatemala Angela Chavez; Ambassador of El Salvador Martha Zelayandia; Ambassador of Nicaragua Saul Arana; Charge d'affaires of Costa Rica Hilda Santiesteban; and Charge d'affaires of Honduras Carlos Mendoza join together to celebrate the 195th Anniversary of Independence of the Central American countries from Spain. YOSHIKI MIURA

social inclusion for the general welfare of our peoples. Dialogue is also needed to continue working together for our sustainable economic development to guarantee broader access to international markets.

In the 1990s, with a desire to incorporate the region into the international economy, the region modernized the legal instruments that created the Central American Integration System. This included the reconsideration of some economic integration objectives and the launching of institutionalization that today extends to the social, environmental, agricultural, health, women, tourism, education, cultural and finance areas.

All times have challenges. Today, Central America strives to become independent in other arenas. It must make progress in democratic security, risk management, climate change, socio-economic integration, the strengthening of democratic in-

stitutions, the struggle to overcome poverty and the eradication of corruption. The region must also address the scourge of violence and drug trafficking, as it has become a route to major drug markets. Additionally, Central America is also grappling with the important issue of migration.

Central America is a privileged region due to its excellent geographic location and business possibilities, with young people qualified in all areas of the economy. Our countries have demonstrated they can overcome great difficulties and make progress on the path to development.

In recent years, individually or collectively, our countries have sought to broaden their relationships with new business partners through the negotiation of free trade agreements. Foreign investment has also been an engine of economic growth and job creation. Both elements have contributed to increased exports

and have energized international trade.

Through these efforts, Central America has made advances in economic development by encouraging more diversified economies, open to the exterior and with dynamic intra-regional trade, the basis for a Central American market. This effort represents an important step toward promoting the development of more equitable societies with reduced poverty levels.

Central America must continue to fight against poverty and adapt to the vulnerabilities of climate change, among other issues. We rely on regional integration and its institutions on this journey toward the development of our common objectives.

In this context, the existence of arenas for inter-regional and international negotiation make it possible to promote solutions and new ways to understand the challenges and common prob-



Beautifully costumed dancers take part in Carnival in Nicaragua's capital of Managua. This colorful annual event expresses joy and social unity. JORGE PALAVICINI/INTUR NICARAGUA



Santa Lucia church, built in 1853, has been declared a national heritage of El Salvador. It was one of the first temples constructed after the establishment of the republic. MINISTRY OF TOURISM, EL SALVADOR

lems together. This also demonstrates the level of independence that Central America can achieve in its legal, institutional and political contexts.

Last year, we celebrated the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Central America and Japan. The anniversary highlighted the importance of the long history of the Central American region with this country. This relationship provides the foundation for the development of projects of mutual interest and benefit.

In this new decade, we seek, with renewed energy, ways to improve, strengthen and transform our relations with Japan. Our history of almost 200 years of independence — and rela-

tions with Japan for nearly half of that — enables us to view the future with optimism and to decisively promote new shared initiatives to bring our peoples even closer.

Finally, allow us to address the Central American community that resides in Japan, representing each of the five countries of the region: We send our best wishes for success and well-being for each of them and their families.

Nicaraguan Ambassador Saul Arana coordinated this article on behalf of the chiefs of missions of the republics of Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.



Renowned as one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, Lake Atitlan in Guatemala is one of the most-visited sites in the country. INGUAT



A beach on Roatan island, Honduras, offers a variety of activities, including scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing, kayaking, diving in a submarine, swimming with dolphins and walking among iguanas. MARCA PAIS HONDURAS



Costa Rica's Arenal Volcano, which stands out for its symmetrical cone, until recently was considered one of the most active volcanoes in the world. Around the volcano, there are many hot springs in beautiful natural settings. ICT

### Working to further strengthen ties

Shunsuke Takei  
PARLIAMENTARY VICE-MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On behalf of the Japanese government, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the peoples of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras on the occasion of their 195th Anniversary of Independence.



Last year marked the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Japan and the five Central American countries. Furthermore, Japan and the Central American Integration System (SICA), comprised of Belize, Panama and the Dominican Republic in addition to the five countries, designated 2015 as Japan-SICA Friendship Year. Mutual interactions and understanding have deepened further in a wide range of areas through various commemorative projects, which included exchanges of celebratory messages of the friendship year between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and leaders of the Central American nations, and the visit to El Salvador and Honduras by Her Imperial Highness Princess Mako.

Boasting a wide variety of attractions such as remains of the Maya civilization, scenic beaches, rich nature with abundant biodiversity and high-class luxury goods, including rum and coffee, the Central American countries occupy an important geographical position bridging North and South America as well as the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Japan has provided cooperation with this region for its development. As parliamentary vice-minister in charge of Latin American and the Caribbean affairs, I'm determined to work on further strengthening the ties with the Central American countries.

**Congratulations**  
to the People of  
Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala,  
Honduras and Nicaragua  
on the 195th Anniversary  
of Their Independence

**Takeshige Ogawa**  
Honorary Consul of  
the Republic of Guatemala in Yokohama  
and  
Group Representative

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Congratulations to the Peoples of Costa Rica,  
El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and  
Nicaragua on the 195th Anniversary  
of Their Independence Day

*Yoshiyuki Morita*  
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