

(Anniversary special)

Colombia Independence Day

Celebrating the peace agreement

GABRIEL DUQUE
AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA



The celebration of the National Independence Day of the Republic of Colombia provides a suitable opportunity to commemorate Colombia's close relationship with Japan; a very

solid, rich and friendly diplomatic relationship that has, as its base, the shared values of democratic freedom, peace-building and respect for the rule of law.

On behalf of President Juan Manuel Santos and the people of Colombia, I would like to express special greetings to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the members of the Japanese government, the Japanese

people and all the organizations that maintain strong ties with Colombia.

Under the leadership of our president, important steps have been taken for the establishment of a long-lasting peace. Of particular importance are the peace agreement reached in November between the government and the FARC guerrilla group and FARC's surrender of weapons under the vigilance and verification of the U.N.

The peace process has revealed the strength of Colombia's institutions and democracy where, through dialogue and democratic participation, citizens decide together the future of the country. Peace efforts have been generously supported by the international community and further recognized through the gesture of awarding the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize to our president.

Colombia is one of the world's most bio-diverse countries, rich in natural resources and known for having a stable

economy and good macroeconomic management. These characteristics, together with the recent peace agreement and social improvements such as security, poverty reduction, widening employment opportunities and equality, motivated the selection of Colombia as the country of the year by The Economist magazine in 2016 and are paving the way for Colombia to become a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

At the center of the Americas, and having coasts on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, Colombia is a convenient logistic hub that offers great connectivity. In terms of economic potential, according to current estimates, the peace-building efforts will result in an additional 1 to 1.5 percent growth in gross domestic product and boost other areas of the economy. Moreover, the country has a dynamic and well-educated population, with more than 55 percent being less

than 30 years old.

Colombia offers a wide array of trade and investment opportunities for Japanese businesses, with two areas of particular potential being agriculture and tourism. Regarding agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. has designated Colombia among the seven countries with the highest food production potential with a predicted annual increase of 5 percent. As for tourism, between 2007 and 2016, the industry has grown at an average of 12.7 percent, while the global average stands at 3.9 percent, according to the World Tourism Organization. Moreover, foreign visitors and foreign investment in hotels and tourism-related activities have seen increased numbers. For the year 2017, Lonely Planet designated Colombia as the second-most preferred destination worldwide.

The economic partnership agreement and double taxation agreement, two bilateral mechanisms currently under negotiation, are expected to further enhance current economic opportunities. Furthermore, Japan and the Asia-Pacific region are of high priority to Colombia.

Concrete steps are being taken to improve Colombia's presence in the region, a good example being The Pacific Alliance; one of the platforms through which Colombia is fortifying ties with Asia and where Japan is playing an important role as an observer.

The commemoration of independence is an excellent occasion to express the interest of the Colombian government to continue working with Japan to invigorate the friendly relations between our countries and to express gratitude to Japan and the international community for their constant support and commitment throughout the peace-building process.



Medellin is the second-largest city in Colombia. PROCOLOMBIA



Panoramic view of Bogotá, the capital and largest city in the country JULIAN SANTACRUZ/PROCOLOMBIA

Accords expected to boost economic ties

KEN KOBAYASHI
CHAIR, JAPAN-COLOMBIA ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, KEIDANREN

I had the privilege to assume the post of chair of Japan-Colombia Economic Committee of Keidanren on May 31. On behalf of the committee, 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 207th Anniversary of Independence.



Under the strong leadership of the president, Colombia is achieving steady economic growth. With a population of 49 million, Colombia embraces a potential consumer market and the establishment of The Pacific Alliance, which aims at free trade among neighboring countries, is making it more attractive.

Furthermore, it was a great pleasure to learn that the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla group made peace in November. In connection with this event, the interest of Japanese companies expanding their business in Colombia is growing, and I highly anticipate an early conclusion of the Japan-Colombia economic partnership agreement (EPA). The EPA not only expands trade and investment between the two nations, but also helps promote future economic integration encompassing the entire Asia region and the Pacific.

Let me wish the Republic of Colombia and its people peace and prosperity on the 207th anniversary of their independence. The Japan-Colombia Economic Committee will continue to do its best to enhance the economic ties between our countries and contribute toward a mutually beneficial future.



Night view of Medellín PROCOLOMBIA

Bilateral relationship enjoys robust and ongoing growth

TATSUMARO TERAZAWA
PRESIDENT OF THE COLOMBIA-JAPAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION



In the name of the Colombia-Japan Friendship Association, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulation on the Independence Day of the Republic of Colombia.

Since its independence, Colombia has maintained a tradition of democracy and stable economic growth constituting the basis for the development of the country.

Last year was a historic milestone for Colombia with the signing of the peace

accord between the government and the FARC guerrilla group to end more than five decades of armed conflict. Colombia has made progress on the agreement and finalized the disarmament process in June. All these advancements will contribute to major economic progress for the country. In addition, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to President Juan Manuel Santos on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for his continuous effort during the peace negotiations with FARC.

In recent years, the bilateral relationship between Japan and Colombia has been strengthening. I strongly believe that improvement in national security will promote a prompt agreement on an economic partnership agreement, which is expected to deepen political, economic and cultural ties between the two countries.

Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Colombia on the 207th Anniversary of Their Independence

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