

Panama Independence Day Special

Shifts in foreign policy expand global relations

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On behalf of the government of the Republic of Panama, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all Panamanian citizens in Japan, on the occasion of the 115th Anniversary

of the Independence. I would also like to greet Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as the noble Japanese people.

Since last year, Panama has been modifying its foreign policy due to changing its circumstances in the international arena. Last year Panama decided to start diplomatic relations with China due to the growing



Casco Antiguo (Old Quarter) is the historic district of Panama City. EMBASSY OF PANAMA

economic relationship, China being the second largest user of the Panama Canal and the largest supplier of the Colon Free Zone.

China's direct investment has also been focused on the development of container and liquefied natural gas terminals on the Caribbean side of Panama; the construction of the fourth bridge over the Panama Canal and a cruise terminal on the Pacific side of the country. Additionally, the presence of the Chinese dates back to the construction of the Panama Railroad in the 1850s, when around 1,000 Chinese worked on this project led by U.S. private entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, President Juan Carlos Varela has started the Falcon Policy, extending our diplomacy beyond traditional geographical areas. This policy is based on strategic political, commercial, logistic and tourism cooperation, which seeks to diversify the presence of Panama in new geographical areas such as Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Australia. Thus, we started the process of opening embassies in Jordan, Australia and Palestine.

In line with this new policy, H.E. Isabel de Saint Malo, vice president and minister for foreign affairs of Panama, has been traveling constantly to Asia. She visited China, South Korea and Japan last year, and this year, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore to explain the advantages of Panama as a strategic partner, which believes in important values such as democracy, transparency,

respect for human rights, freedom of navigation, gender equality and the rule of law in order to keep peace in the international system.

At the United Nations, Panama is fully committed to implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On Sept. 25, 2015, Panama joined the countries, which are committed to organize their policies and programs toward the realization of the 17 SDGs. Thus, Panama began a process of national appropriation of SDGs, involving the government, citizens and civil society. Panama also established Executive Decree No. 393 on Sept. 14, 2015, as the legal basis to align the SDGs with our national policies and programs for socioeconomic development.

Panama reported its Voluntary National Review to the U.N.'s High-Level Political Forum, explaining our progress on SDGs. The report included six SDGs as a government priority, namely, Goal 1 "No Poverty," Goal 2 "Zero Hunger," Goal 3 "Health and Well-Being," Goal 4 "Quality Education," Goal 5 "Gender Equality," Goal 9 "Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure" and Goal 14 "Life Below Water."

Another new area in our foreign policy is tackling natural disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean. On Nov. 19, Panama will establish the Regional Logistics Center for Humanitarian Assistance (CLRAH) located at the Panama Pacifico International Airport, whose logistics platform

seeks to put at the service of all humanitarian actors infrastructure for the delivery of help in case of natural disasters.

In addition to having ample warehouses and an airport, the Humanitarian Hub will carry out a training program for local and regional personnel to provide a quick response to major natural disasters.

Our government, having become a cooperating country, has also developed a new international cooperation program called Panama Cooperates, providing triangular cooperation to help underdeveloped nations. This program also provides funds for foreign students to spend an academic semester in a Panamanian university, so they can study its language and culture. It also includes the exchange of foreign diplomats to learn about our government's foreign policy objectives.

Not only has our government expanded Panama's presence beyond the traditional geographical areas, but also in other fields of diplomacy such as cultural, scientific and academic diplomacy.

On the cultural front, the ministry of foreign affairs has instructed Panama embassies all over the world to carry out cultural programs including music, dance, gastronomy, movie-showing, painting exhibitions, among others, to disseminate information about Panama's way of life.

For scientific and academic diplomacy, we are promoting exchanges of professors and students between Panama and other countries. In Japan, we have already implemented exchanges between the University of Panama and the Technological University of Panama with Chiba University in

the area of controlled environment agriculture, and soon other universities will join this exchange.

Finally, I would like to point out that

Panama is a small country committed to the development of a peaceful world, where dialogue and consensus should prevail in global relationships.

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This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

**Congratulations
on the 115th Anniversary of
the Independence of
the Republic of Panama**

 **Mitsubishi Corporation**