

Paraguay's 100th anniversary of relations

Diplomatic friendship rich with ongoing collaboration

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The official visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Paraguay is a vigorous gesture that reinforces our joint ideals of democracy and free trade. On the eve of 100 years of diplomatic relations we are taking a step forward, as Paraguay has shown that it can be a valuable ally and contribute to the progress and stability of the world. This visit is a very important milestone in our relations, the result of long-standing cooperation and friendship, and likewise constitutes the official opening of the celebrations for the anniversary of 100 years of diplomatic relations.

In June, our Chancellor Luis Casti-



President of the Republic of Paraguay Mario Abdo Benitez

glioni, acting as designated minister, toured Tokyo, the cities of Fukuyama and Onomichi in Hiroshima Prefecture, as well as the Kansai region. On that trip, Castiglioni held a bilateral meeting with his counterpart, Minister of Foreign Affairs



Taro Kono, during which they reaffirmed the strategic nature of the Paraguay-Japan relationship and endorsed the extension of our international policy. During his visit, Castiglioni ratified Paraguayan support to Japan for its World Exhibition candidacy and today we are celebrating that Osaka has been selected to host the World Expo 2025.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Paraguay and Japan, our country has desired to enrich these ties and promote greater exchanges. This desire was first fulfilled thanks to Japanese immigration 80 years ago and again when the 1950s brought about close cooperation between both governments, which continues to this day, and is currently strengthened and renewed by fresh opportunities in trade and investment. And it is imperative to note that this is reflected in the collaboration of our countries on the international agenda.

Today, diplomatic ties with Japan are a top priority for Paraguay. We understand perfectly that in a world where new walls are being built, it is the responsibility of our governments to create new bridges, strengthen bilateral ties among friendly countries and trust that multilateralism based on international values is the path to prosperity.



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Mario Abdo Benitez with the logo commemorating next year's anniversary of 100 years of friendship between Paraguay and Japan at the Government Palace in Asuncion on Dec. 2. PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY



The Government Palace, also known as the Palace of the Lopez, is located in the center of Asuncion. EMBASSY OF PARAGUAY

Paraguay sees in Japan not only a friend, but also an ally to carry out this objective of growth and progress, as we are witnessing an ever-deepening mutual trust and mutual understanding between Paraguay and Japan. The Paraguayan people greatly appreciate the positive relationship between us, that in spite of existing an immense geographical distance we are encouraging a closer friendship.

Diplomatic relations between Paraguay and Japan began in 1919, specifically on Nov. 17 with the signing of the Paraguay-Japan Commerce Treaty. This international agreement turned out to be one of the most important for Paraguay, since it was the cornerstone for a long friendship with Japan; a friendship that has been growing steadily.

Our diplomatic relations were strengthened in 1956 with the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants. This first migration was followed by other brave people from

Hyogo, Hiroshima and other prefectures, who settled in different parts of Paraguay and founded the first colonies, which today are important cities. With hard work, these Japanese developed their communities and now they have become an inseparable part of the Paraguayan culture.

It is impossible to talk about our relationships without mentioning another very important milestone, the arrival of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 1956. In the beginning, JICA assistance was focused on the Japanese communities in helping them to improve and increase their agricultural production. That assistance soon evolved into numerous larger projects, throughout the length and breadth of Paraguayan territory, focused mainly on technical assistance and infrastructure in Paraguayan agricultural communities.

Today, JICA works closely with the

Paraguayan public and private sectors in achieving sustainable development. This collaboration with JICA is strengthened every year and will continue in the future, and for this reason we are very grateful to the Japanese people.

Paraguay is now an agricultural power and a country that wants to be a leader in sustainable development. We are a major exporter of 100 percent green electric power, and a substantial exporter of soy, corn and beef. This achievement is the result of hard work, research and investment, as well as assistance from foreign friends, particularly Japan, as I noted.

In the past few years, Paraguay has shown that we can grow and prosper, we can be competitive, we can be innovative, but above all, that we can maintain a solid macroeconomic policy, something we must do because stability is the key to the

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to the Republic of Paraguay
on the 100th Anniversary of the Establishment
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Diverse cultural exchanges

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future. And in the past few years, Japan has shown that when international trade is at risk, Japan will assume the leadership needed in times of crisis.

Paraguay and Japan base their friendship on shared values. Paraguay, like Japan, firmly believes in democracy, trusts in fair trade, accepts as true the peaceful use of nuclear energy and we both promote further unity in the international community. Paraguay has demonstrated these values through its role in Mercosur, the South American common market that includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, while Japan has demonstrated them in a leadership role in concluding the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Paraguay is a strong ally of Japan in the multilateral sphere, where we defend similar positions in international organizations and forums, and we are also in a position to be commercial partners and benefit each other. Paraguay is an excellent destination for Japanese companies, where they can find a welcoming investment environment for growing and expanding to new markets and regions.

Paraguay can be transformed into a very important commercial hub, where the companies there will have access to significant competitive advantages, including low taxes, tariff incentives, a young and highly motivated workforce, abundant electric power and more. This excellent environment promises quality production and stable cost-benefit conditions for our region, and Japanese companies settling in Paraguay will be part of a much larger production chain with other Mercosur countries, benefiting all parties.

Paraguay-Japan relations

The year 2018 is marked by the growing number of Japanese companies interested in investing in Paraguay. Last month, two business missions were carried out in Paraguay. The first delegation visited our country in early November and was organized in collaboration with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and JETRO Sao Paulo, and was composed of representatives of 11 Japanese companies from the auto parts, logistics, security, advisory services, construction and machinery sectors. These companies are based in Brazil and



President Mario Abdo Benitez and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shake hands at the Government Palace in Asuncion on Dec. 2. PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF PARAGUAY

see Paraguay as a strategic ally, thanks to our business-friendly climate. This trilateral cooperation between Paraguay, Japan and Brazil has been transformed into a green field investment opportunity for Japanese investors who want to achieve a competitive role in global markets.

The second delegation visited Paraguay last week, organized by JICA with the support of my embassy, and was composed of representatives of medium-sized Japanese companies, who want to explore business opportunities in Paraguay by taking advantage of the large Japanese community. In this effort, the business experiences and positive outcome of Japanese companies already based in Paraguay such as Tsuneishi Group, Sumitomo Denso, Yazaki Sogyo and Fujikura were of great help. In addition, the openness and excellent teamwork of both government agencies have been remarkable. Both business delegations are the result of close collaboration between the public and private sectors of both Paraguay and Japan.

I should highlight the direct ties that Paraguay has with the prefectures of Chiba, Osaka, Hyogo and Hiroshima to name a few. Our friendship toward Chiba distinguishes itself by the twinning of the cities of Chiba and Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, in 1970. Since then, numerous projects of cooperation and exchanges in culture and sports have taken place. This year, the 11th All Japan Arpa Competition was hosted by the city of Chiba and brought together young Japanese harpists from all over Japan. The competitors have a great love for the Paraguayan harp, known as the arpa, and its compositions, and all chose to dress in

nanduti, a traditional Paraguayan fabric. The number of students and fans of the Paraguayan harp in Japan today exceeds 10,000.

Chiba was also the venue for the 10th edition of the Paraguay Friendly Cup, an amateur soccer tournament for men, women and children. At the professional level, two Paraguayan soccer players were part of the permanent staff of JEF United (2016-2018), earning the love and support of the fans of Chiba.

In relation to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, conversations to establish the Hiroshima cities of Fukuyama, Onomichi and Jinseki Kogen, as well as Fuchu, Tokyo, as host towns are far advanced. This weekend the President of the Paraguayan Olympic Committee, Camilo Perez Lopez Moreira, signed memorandums of intentions with the mayors of these cities. The people of these cities and Paraguayans will learn both country's cultures and we expect many sports exchanges and experiences between students before and after the Olympics. There are already plans for festivals and other events in those cities and it will be an honor to share this experience with those communities. In this regard, we appreciate the constant support of the Tsuneishi Group for facilitating contact between these cities and the Paraguayan Olympic Committee; their support is fundamental for this project.

Within the framework of 100 years of diplomatic relations, the official logo of the celebrations has been unveiled, in the presence of Prime Minister Abe and President Mario Abdo Benitez. This logo has a significant meaning as it symbolizes the unity and friendship among the Paraguayan and Japanese people, it has the colors of both national flags and nanduti, which is traditional of Paraguay, and represents people helping each other and holding hands. This logo will be used distinctly in all events that will be held both in Paraguay and Japan in 2019. We are working on a large agenda of cultural, artistic and festive activities, and several events are already scheduled, including concerts, dances, festivals and artistic workshops.

Throughout 2019, the Embassy of Paraguay will be announcing the dates of each event. For the moment, two major concerts have been confirmed with Berta Rojas, currently the most renowned Paraguayan guitarist, as well as an exhibition of visual works by the Paraguayan artist Rafael Gross-Brown. Additionally, the next edition of the Paraguayan Festival in Tokyo, which annually attracts more than 25,000 people, is expected to exceed that number next October. Finally, the main commemoration event will be held on Nov. 17, 2019.



Paraguayan women at the Kimono Show event in Asuncion on Feb. 18, 2016. JAPANESE FEDERATION OF PARAGUAY

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

Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Paraguay
on the 100th Anniversary of
the Establishment of
Diplomatic Relations between
Japan and Paraguay

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