

Argentina National Day Special

Bilateral relations thriving despite difficult times

GUILLERMO HUNT
AMBASSADOR OF THE ARGENTINE
REPUBLIC TO JAPAN



In December 2020, President Alberto Fernandez appointed me as ambassador to Japan. I am honored to serve in such an important country, a leading player on the world stage and a very significant partner of Argentina. I am fully committed to upholding the interests of my country and further improving the already excellent bilateral relations between Argentina and Japan.

When I arrived in Tokyo in February this year, I came across a city that impressed

me with its dynamism and strength, its mixture of top-notch technology and timeless traditions, and the energetic discipline of its friendly people. This makes my diplomatic posting in Japan undoubtedly interesting, but at the same time more challenging, since I need to find overly creative ways to promote the products and culture of Argentina in such a competitive environment.

In the same way as 2020, this year is marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Argentine Embassy, we are strictly following the Japanese guidelines to prevent the virus from spreading further. In this framework, we have decided to cancel our traditional national day celebration and have an online commemoration instead.

Since the start of the pandemic, our governments have exchanged views and experiences about its impact on our societ-

ies in a number of fields, such as education, travel, sports and health systems. In this regard, we are grateful for Japan's nonreimbursable cooperation in acquiring medical equipment to improve our hospitals' response.

Amid the pandemic, in December 2020, we held online the 25th Bilateral Political Consultations Meeting, at the vice minister level. It was a good opportunity to review all the aspects of our bilateral agenda and to propose actions on issues that could see improvement.

Shortly after, in January, Minister of Foreign Affairs Toshimitsu Motegi paid an official visit to Argentina. This marked a very special occasion for the Argentine government because it was the first high-level visit since the president took office in December 2019, just before the travel restrictions took force.

The Japanese minister's visit to Argentina and other Latin American countries shows the importance that Japan assigns to our region, both in political and economic terms. In Buenos Aires he held fruitful meetings with our president and Foreign Minister Felipe Sola, in which the strategic partnership between Argentina and Japan was reaffirmed based on shared values of peace, democracy, multilateralism and human rights, as well as the promotion of closer bilateral economic links.

We are working to increase business between Japanese and Argentine counterparts. The number of Japanese companies in Argentina has grown in recent years, some of them benefiting from Argentina's position as a platform to produce goods and export them to the region. As a member of Mercosur, the South American common market made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, as well as ALADI, also known as the Latin American Integration Association, with 13 regional member states, our country offers an excellent platform to sell, with tariff preferences, to a market of up to 520 million people with a combined gross domestic product of over \$5 trillion. There are a number of good examples of Japanese companies established in Argentina that have increased their investments and opened up new production lines with the aim of exporting to the regional market and beyond.

Moreover, Argentina is ready to become a relevant partner on Japan's path to achieve a carbon neutral society by 2050. Green ammonia and hydrogen, generated from wind and solar power, as well as liquefied natural gas, blue ammonia and hydrogen produced from Vaca Muerta's shale gas reserves, are some of the options for Japan to enjoy to diversify its energy supply and during its journey to achieve energy security. The energy transition also means demand will grow for lithium and copper to produce electric vehicles, and Argentina has huge resources of both.



Patagonian lamb is available in Japan. VISITARGENTINA

Japanese companies are already operating in these fields in Argentina and see bright business prospects.

We actively promote trade with Japan. Argentina is widely recognized as one of the world's top producers of commodities and agricultural goods, and our exports to Japan include several products, such as beef from Patagonia, wild king shrimp, South Atlantic hake and squid, wines (especially malbec), Patagonian lamb, aluminum, design textiles, honey, salt, milk, caramel, yerba mate (a plant used in tea-like beverages), olive oil and our distinctive bon o bon sweets, among others. We look forward to widening the range of Argentine products in Japan.

We also have an important task in promoting Argentine culture, which has found in Japan a favorable environment to develop. Argentine tango arrived in Japan more than 100 years ago and today enjoys a large number of followers, quality musicians and renowned dancers. Aside from tango, however, Argentine traditional music has also taken root in Japanese soil,

where it blooms at the Cosquin Festival, an annual folklore celebration that has taken place in Kawamata, Fukushima Prefecture, since 1975.

Although Argentina and Japan are more than 18,000 kilometers apart, we are united by a close friendship of more than 120 years, which is strengthened day by day through contacts between our peoples in all areas of society. Our commitment is to continue working for even closer ties between our countries.

Today, May 25, Argentina celebrates its national day, commemorating the establishment of its first national government in 1810. On this occasion, on behalf of the government and people of Argentina, I wish to convey my warmest greetings to Their Majesties Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, the government and people of Japan.

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

Strong ties underpin economic recovery

KEN KOBAYASHI
CHAIRMAN OF THE JAPAN-ARGENTINE
BUSINESS COOPERATION COMMITTEE



On behalf of the Japan-Argentina Business Cooperation Committee, I am delighted to extend my warmest congratulations to the government and people of the Argentine Republic as the country celebrates its national day.

Underpinned by deep and long-standing ties in trade and investment, as well as people-to-people links, Japan and Argentina share a historic friendship and collaboration spanning more than 120 years. In the face of the numerous challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan clearly demonstrated its commitment to deepening the strategic partnership of the two nations with Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi's visit to Buenos Aires in January when he met with President Alberto Fernandez and Foreign Minister Felipe Sola.

While nurturing intimate diplomatic relations, Japan-Argentina economic activities have grown in depth and scope, with the number of Japanese companies operating in Argentina expanding significantly over the past decade. More recently, a number of new large-scale investment projects by Japanese companies have been announced since the inauguration of Fernandez in December 2019. In order for both our nations to further strengthen bilateral commercial, economic, and investment cooperation, we look forward to the early ratification of the tax convention and investment treaty by Argentina.

With COVID-19 vaccination efforts in full force, economies look broadly set for a vigorous rebound, but the divergent recoveries amid the uncertainty arising from new virus mutations and the accumulating human toll raise genuine concerns. Following the

25th Argentina-Japan Joint Business Conference, held in Buenos Aires in May 2018, new economic initiatives and discussions between the two nations have been underway in new areas such as health care, digital transformation and hydrogen, just to name a few. I believe that Japanese technology and expertise can contribute substantially toward the successful development of our already solid economic relationship.

While the global outlook remains highly uncertain just over a year into the pandemic, I am hopeful that both our nations will overcome the challenges through strong international cooperation just as we have done countless times throughout history. As chairman of the Japan-Argentina Business Cooperation Committee, I look forward to promoting even stronger ties and economic relations between our two nations in this ever-changing business environment.



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