

**Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan Fumio Kishida on
Japan's Foreign Policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean**

“Embarking on A New Voyage with Latin America and the Caribbean”

Monday, April 29 at 18:25 – 18:50

Venue: Hyatt Regency Mexico City

In a meeting held by the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations (COMEXI)

1. 400 years thereafter

Mr. Bernardo Sepúlveda-Amor, Vice-President of the International Court of Justice,

Mr. Jaime Zabudovsky, President of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations,

Ladies and gentlemen of the Council,

I am very pleased and grateful to be given this valuable opportunity today.

I find it particularly significant to be able to speak with you here in Mexico today. It has been 6 years since a foreign minister of Japan last made a speech on Japan's foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean and visited Mexico. And in 1613, exactly 400 years ago, a certain Japanese delegation set sail from Japan to Mexico.

Leading the mission of approximately 180 Japanese delegates was Tsunenaga Hasekura, a samurai of the Date Clan in northern Japan. He headed for Mexico seeking trade and permission for Christian missionary work for the Date Domain.

Although the trip would only take 13 hours from Japan to Mexico on a direct flight today, back then it took three long months for the delegation to navigate across the Pacific Ocean. The delegation stayed in Mexico for four months then proceeded to Cuba and Spain making their utmost efforts to obtain permission for trade.

Unfortunately, the Hasekura Mission was not successful in achieving its objectives and returned to Japan disappointed. Nevertheless, the attempt made by the Hasekura Mission was the first time in history in which East-Asia sought to establish trade relations across the Pacific Ocean. From this perspective, their epic adventure was instrumental in opening up a whole new horizon in Japan's diplomacy.

It has been 400 years since the Hasekura Mission set sail for Mexico. In light of this memorable anniversary, I would like to explain two pillars of Japan's diplomacy towards Latin America and the Caribbean in order to raise the enduring relationship of friendship between us and the region to a new level. The first pillar consists in the establishment of a new cooperative relationship for achieving development where Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean complement and cooperate with one another. The second pillar is to join hands globally and to orient our views towards creating a better international community based on common rules.

Since the Hasekura Mission, there have been successions of Japanese who have been drawn to the diverse possibilities of the Latin America and the Caribbean region. The history of those Japanese who transferred to this continent stretches back more than 100 years. There are currently approximately 1.65 million people of Japanese descent residing in Latin America and the Caribbean, of which approximately 20,000 live in Mexico. Japanese immigrants have integrated into each society and play a prominent role in different fields contributing to the development of each country. As is thus demonstrated, Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean have been overcoming physical distance for a long time in nurturing the fraternal bonds that we enjoy today.

I am very proud of these Japanese immigrants and their descendants. And I have heard that in Brazil, where a Japanese community of approximately 1.5 million thrives in many fields, there is a phrase that goes by “*Japonês garantido*,” meaning “Japanese reliability”.

Because of the long history that we share, our cultural ties are also very strong. Football and baseball are favorite sports of the people of both Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean. There have been many great matches that have taken place between us. The heartbreaking loss of the Japanese National Football Team to the Mexican National Team at the London Olympics last year is still fresh in our mind. Whilst offering my respect to Mexico, the Olympic champions, we hope to return the favor at the coming Olympic Games in Rio

de Janeiro.

Two years ago, after the Great East Japan Earthquake, tofus made from soybeans harvested by farmers of Japanese descent in Paraguay were delivered to the disaster affected areas in the wish to aid the reconstruction efforts of their homeland. On each packaged was written a large message that read, “Our Hearts are One”. Moreover, many people from Latin America and the Caribbean residing in Japan paid visits to the disaster affected areas to assist in the reconstruction efforts. The warm affections and kindness you have shown shall never be forgotten.

In the same vein, at the time of the Mexico City Earthquake in 1985, Japan was quick to dispatch a Disaster Relief Team. Our relationship of cooperation therefore has a very long history. We the Japanese, hope to continue to cherish these long-standing bonds with the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

2. Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean in transformation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking back at the politics and economy of Latin America and the Caribbean over the last 20 years, I cannot but be awed by the region’s transformation.

Until 20 or 30 years ago, it may be said that Latin America and the Caribbean attracted attention of a different type. Political instability and civil wars in the

region were widely reported in Japan. There was even a time when numerous Japanese companies were withdrawing from Latin American and Caribbean countries that were facing currency crises and fell into default.

However, today, Latin America and the Caribbean have transformed itself into a region where democracy and the rule of law have taken root. In almost all countries, governments are democratically elected and countries are governed not by force, but by the rule of law.

Economically speaking, Latin America and the Caribbean are attracting global attention in the positive sense. Countless companies have been drawn to the region's appeal in recent years. Starting with Panama, which has seen double-digit growth for two consecutive years, the entire Latin America and the Caribbean region is growing strongly, with an average GDP growth of 4% to 6% over the past decade. Latin America and the Caribbean's GDP, the high growth rate of which has made the region a growth center of the global economy along with Asia, is already approximately 2.5 times larger than that of ASEAN.

In spite of their economic growth, it is also true that there remain challenges. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there still exists a large gap between the rich and the poor.

However, Latin America and the Caribbean have indeed transformed itself. For example, His Excellency Mr. Enrique Peña Nieto, President of the United Mexican States, aims to create an “Inclusive Country”, whilst His Excellency Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, advocates “Social Inclusion”. In their pursuit of a better form of economic development, one which mitigates poverty and rectifies disparity, I believe we are witnessing a new shape of Latin America and the Caribbean emerging.

Conversely, whilst Latin America and the Caribbean started on the path to prosperity in the 1990s, the Japanese economy fell into recession. 20 years since, Japan suffers from deflation, low growth, and an unprecedented declining birthrate and an aging population. Furthermore, since the Great East Japan Earthquake, we are faced with the need to review our energy policies.

Population decline, an aging society, and energy issues are, without a doubt, challenging issues. Nevertheless, Japan aims to convert these challenges into opportunities and take the lead in our efforts toward global development. The Administration of Prime Minister Abe is seeking to achieve economic revival through a plan consisting of “three arrows” namely; bold monetary policy, flexible fiscal policy, and a growth strategy that encourages private sector investment. We will consolidate a growth model that ends deflation and actively incorporates the elderly and women into the workforce. In dealing with the issue of energy shortage, we will advance in the development of energy-saving

technology and take the lead in the worldwide transition to a green economy. The economic policy of the Abe Administration is widely supported by its citizens and we are starting to see some of its effects such as the rise of stock prices. Japan is recovering its spirits. We hope to thus lead the way in confronting and resolving these challenges of the 21st century.

By overcoming difficulties together, Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean can develop anew. We hope to cooperate with the region in our pursuit to build a more prosperous and a better world. .

3. Japan, and Latin America and the Caribbean: Developing side by side

What shape should our new cooperative relationship take? A moment ago, I referred to Latin America and the Caribbean as a growth center for the global economy. In helping one another between Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve prosperity, we must also think of ways to achieve happiness of our citizens. This is the first pillar of Japan's foreign policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean.

Interest in Latin America and the Caribbean among Japanese companies has been growing more than ever. In the past five years, the number of Japanese companies with offices in Latin America and the Caribbean has increased by approximately 200.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region that produces many of the mining resources and foodstuffs indispensable to Japan. From copper, lithium and molybdenum to soy beans and poultry, Japan relies on the region for many types of resources and foodstuffs. Trade between Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean has doubled in the in the past ten years.

Japanese companies are not simply selling and buying products in Latin America and the Caribbean. They are also transferring advanced technology, jointly creating products with the local people, and pursuing models of business in which they develop alongside the local people.

Recently, the president of a Japanese company visited Brazil and met with Her Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil. During the meeting, President Rousseff apparently remarked, “Your company has come not just to sell products. But rather, you are seeking to establish roots here in the Brazilian market, and for which, I offer my full cooperation.”

With the aim of promoting such cooperation between Japanese companies and Latin America and Caribbean companies, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) will host in November of this year, the Japan-Latin America Business Forum in Tokyo, providing a place of encounter between companies from both sides. The Japanese Government is also looking to cooperate fully in promoting trade and investment between Japan and Latin America and the

Caribbean, effectively utilizing measures such as ODAs.

Nonetheless, companies are not the only entities sharing advanced science and technology to Latin America and the Caribbean. The Government is also making utmost efforts regarding the matter. As ex-Minister of Science and Technology, it is my pleasure to announce that Japan will hold a robot contest in the near future in Latin America and the Caribbean region, cooperating with the universities in the region. A robot contest is a competition where students compete with robots they create, and is able to transmit the appeal of science and technology to a wide audience. Japan will help Latin America and the Caribbean foster the scientists of tomorrow.

A moment ago, I spoke of “social inclusion”. Japan hopes to work with Latin America and the Caribbean in resolving the persistent challenges of disparity and poverty reduction.

There exist, among Japan’s international cooperation frameworks, projects known as “Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects”. These are based on the concept of human security, which aims to protect the livelihood and dignity of individual human beings. Under this concept, Japan is providing cooperation such as the construction of water and sewerage systems and elementary schools, to address the daily needs of the people of Latin American and the Caribbean region.

With the understanding that those who know best the Latin America and the Caribbean region are the people of the region themselves, Japan, together with Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Argentina is implementing triangular cooperation in many countries of the region. For example, Mexican specialists trained by the Japanese government in anti-seismic measures are helping Haiti. For over ten years, this type of cooperation has contributed greatly to the development of Latin America and the Caribbean. Japan, as a partner of the region is exerting every effort towards its development.

Economic relations with Latin America and the Caribbean are not limited to bilateral relationships. In an increasingly globalized world economy, Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean, a region where many countries are active promoters of free trade, are like-minded partners.

Japan is currently reinforcing our economic diplomacy as one of the three pillars of our foreign policy. In order to increase trade and support the overseas expansion of Japanese companies, it is vital that we promote economic links with other countries, which are in accordance with our national interests.

One of the first Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) concluded by Japan was the Japan-Mexico EPA. Since then, Japan has concluded EPAs with Chile and Peru, and is currently in negotiations with Colombia. We wish to further

strengthen our economic relations with Latin America and the Caribbean countries oriented toward free trade. Accordingly, Japan is participating in the Pacific Alliance as an observer and is determined to strengthen the relation with the Alliance through periodic working level meetings. Japan wishes to act as a bridge of economic links between Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Consider the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a grand concept calling for the establishment of a network of economic links in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan will soon participate in negotiations whilst Mexico, Peru and Chile from the Latin America and the Caribbean region, are participating in the negotiations. We are seeking to establish free trade across the Pacific Ocean, completing a mission that Hasekura set out to accomplish some 400 years ago. With these thoughts in mind, Japan looks to actively participate in the TPP negotiations.

4. Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean, working together globally

I would now like to touch upon the second pillar of Japan's foreign policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean; the creation of a better international community.

What I have in mind when I refer to "a better international community" is one which enjoys peace, a peace that is maintained not by force, but by common rules.

At the outset, I mentioned that the rule of law has been established in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that democracy has taken root in almost all countries of the region. I am pleased to note that the two fundamental principles of statehood, democracy and the rule of law are shared by Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Just as our own countries are governed by laws, so too must the international community be governed by common rules. Lamentably, we cannot yet say that this “rule of law” has been fully ingrained in the world. As we seek to resolve the challenges that the international community faces, Japan wishes to lead, along with the Latin America and the Caribbean region, in the rule making efforts of the world. This is the shape of the cooperation that we seek with Latin America and the Caribbean.

As the world’s only wartime victim of nuclear bombs, Japan is exerting its efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation. Furthermore, as a native of Hiroshima, a city that directly suffered the calamities of nuclear arms, I would like to express my extensive admiration for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that concluded the Treaty of Tlatelolco here in Mexico. The Latin America and the Caribbean region, which had concluded a nuclear free treaty more than 40 years ago, can aptly be considered a pioneer in efforts to realize a world free of nuclear weapons.

On April 2, the Arms Trade Treaty was adopted at the United Nations (UN). This treaty aims to strengthen measures to regulate the international transfer of conventional arms. This groundbreaking endeavor was initiated and co-presented by twelve countries including Japan, Mexico, Argentina, and Costa Rica.

As the above illustrates, Latin America and the Caribbean is a reliable partner of Japan in the international community. I have keenly felt the growing influence of this region in the international community. I recently had a meeting with Mr. Ángel Gurría, Secretary-General of the OECD, and I was impressed how energetic he is in his activities. Furthermore, the successes of the COP16 in 2010 and the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) attest to Latin America and the Caribbean being one of the leading regions in the world today.

There are many issues which the international community must tackle, such as climate change and environmental problems, the formulation of new international development goals, disarmament and non-proliferation or the reform of the United Nations. Therefore, Japan hopes to strengthen its cooperative relations with Latin America and the Caribbean even further. In light of which, I would like to announce here that I will be holding a Foreign Ministerial Meeting with representatives from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) sometime this year in order for us to

work together to resolve these issues.

5. Embarking on a New Voyage Latin America and the Caribbean

Ladies and gentlemen,

400 years ago, Hasekura and his delegation set off from Japan on voyage of epic proportions across the Pacific Ocean. It was an odyssey of unimaginable difficulties motivated by the strong conviction to carve out a new future. What motivated Hasekura, in today's words, was the pursuit of globalization that brought together different regions of the globe. Inheriting this grand vision and courage, I call upon you to join us as Japan seeks board the same ship with Latin America and the Caribbean as it embarks on their new voyage.

Hasekura's delegation continued from Mexico to Spain, and endeavored to fulfill the duty with which he had been entrusted with. It is said that those with the surname of "Japón" in Spain are descendants of Hasekura's delegation. Similarly, it is also said that some members of the delegation remained behind in Mexico. The deep and enduring bonds between Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean remain strong and alive to this day.

Let us further cultivate the bonds that have been long-fostered and work together to prosper together. Let us likewise join hands globally in seeking to achieve a better international community based on rules.

Thank you for your attention.