

Speech on Japan's Foreign Policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean
“Paving a Pathway to ‘Human Dignity’ with Latin America and the Caribbean”

1. A new pathway for Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean

Ladies and gentlemen,

Boa tarde.

Today, I am back in Sao Paulo, as Prime Minister of Japan, after my previous visit here in 2013. Sharing this moment with Japanese immigrants and descendants, Nikkei, and Japanese businessmen, I feel that I have finally overcome the feeling of *saudade* for Brazil that has been building within me these past ten years.

Moreover, it is an honor to have the opportunity to deliver this speech at the University of Sao Paulo, one of the most renowned and with a proud history. I understand that the University of Sao Paulo and the University of Tsukuba in Japan have just signed a letter of intent for the holding of a meeting of Japanese and Brazilian university presidents. I welcome this and hope for active academic exchanges between the two countries.

I have come to Sao Paulo thinking about a new “pathway” to take together on the long journey to get here.

Approximately 150 years ago, when Japan was finally embarking on its modernization, Latin American countries were our mentors. It was these countries, our irreplaceable friends, that reached out and showed us the “pathway” to joining the international community.

Japan learned a great deal from Latin America, and also received a great many opportunities. Dreaming of success in Latin America, many Japanese people left

their homes, betting everything on starting afresh in an unfamiliar country on the other side of the globe. Sao Paulo was where the first Japanese immigrants to Brazil arrived on their new “path” at the beginning of the 20th century. There are many such “paths,” soaked with the sweat of countless Japanese people, across Brazil and the wider continent.

After the passage of more than a century of history, the world’s largest Nikkei community is a shining presence here today. In Sao Paulo, Japanese food enjoys great popularity and there are said to be more *temakeria* than McDonalds. I also learnt that the spread of Japanese *sake* has inspired “*sakepirinha*” instead of *caipirinha*.

Furthermore, in 1956, when Japan, which had been defeated in World War II, sought to join the United Nations, all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean at the time agreed to Japan’s accession. Once again, the countries of this region reached out to show Japan a new “pathway.” We will never forget the support that was extended to us by our friends of this region.

Ten years ago, as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, I gave a speech titled “Embarking on A New Voyage with Latin America and the Caribbean.” In that speech, I described a vision for cooperation from two perspectives: “Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean: Developing side by side,” and “Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean, working together globally.”

Since then, we have continued our voyage together for more than a decade. Our relationship has flourished into an important partnership in which we respect and learn from each other.

However, the situation surrounding the international community is completely different to what it was ten years ago. The international order is facing new challenges, and the freedom and democracy we advocate are under threat around

the world.

Precisely at such times, however, let me reflect on the “path” we have taken together, and share with you my view of a new “pathway” for a better future. Today, I would like to make this a time when Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean embark on a new voyage together.

That is because Japan and the world are counting on Latin America and the Caribbean. This region is one with which we share values and principles, and which possesses great potential for contributing actively to resolving global issues. This year, Brazil holds the G20 presidency, and Peru is chairing APEC. It is also the Japan-CARICOM Friendship Year. The global spotlight is shining here on Latin America and the Caribbean. This is the ideal time to join hands and discuss how to shape the world together.

Today, I would like to talk about the “pathway” we must take together over the next decade, as Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean combine their collective strengths to lead the world towards cooperation.

2. Partners for realizing “human dignity”

“Human dignity.”

This is the starting point for global cooperation, and one that I announced at the UN General Assembly last year, as president of the G7, after I deepened discussions with President Lula and other leaders from the major regions of the world. I am certain that when Japan raises the goal of realizing a world caring for “human dignity,” the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean will be there by our side as irreplaceable partners.

What, then, is needed to realize a world caring for “human dignity?” Today, I

would like to clearly set out three directions in which Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean, and indeed, the rest of the world also, should work together to achieve this goal.

Firstly, building a peaceful and stable world is essential for ensuring that everyone can live with dignity. In my speech in 2013, I expressed my admiration to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for having transformed from a region once affected by repeated civil wars and political instability into one where democracy and the rule of law have taken root.

Amid today's blatant challenges to the free and open international order based on the rule of law, we must lead the world with determination, knowing as we do that this order exists to protect the dignity of the most vulnerable countries and people.

Secondly, we must also overcome common challenges for humanity, encompassing everything from climate change and international health to issues of disparities and poverty. This region is being impacted by climate change, including reduced traffic through the Panama Canal due to water shortages and the historically low water levels in the Amazon region, and Caribbean countries are facing the vulnerabilities particular to small island states. Many countries in this region are also tackling issues of disparities and poverty.

These are not challenges to be resolved by someone else, but must be dealt with by Latin America and the Caribbean themselves. Japan must also work with the region to resolve these challenges. As President Lula himself noted, a fair international order demands that "we all have a voice."

Thirdly, "human dignity" is fulfilled as people progress towards prosperity. It must be shared by everyone around the world, and not come at the expense of anyone.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have consistently supported the rules-based free and fair economic order and, by sharing their abundant food and resources with other countries through free trade, have contributed to world prosperity. It is economic relations based on trust, not the threat of force and coercion, that lead to fair prosperity.

3. Diversity of pathways

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am sure that everyone can all broadly agree on the direction for overcoming these three challenges. On top of that, while the goal we must achieve may be the same, the “pathway” to take can differ by country.

Take, for example, the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. As someone from Hiroshima, this is a goal I have pursued throughout my political career. Japan is the world’s only wartime victim of nuclear bombs, while Latin America and the Caribbean was the first region in the world to become a nuclear-weapon-free zone. I am sure that I need not reiterate the significance of our working together to realize this goal. In March, Japan announced the establishment of FMCT Friends. This group aims to halt the quantitative growth of nuclear weapons by banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. Brazil is also a member. Japan is promoting realistic and practical approach, by implementing the “Hiroshima Action Plan” including this initiative.

A world without nuclear weapons is our shared goal, and there are diverse approaches to realizing that goal. Japan will work with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, exchanging views and engaging in dialogue on the ways for us to cooperate on the “path” forward.

The same goes for responses to regional affairs and global issues. If we can unite

behind the fundamental goal of “human dignity,” then positive acceptance, respect for, and learning from the diversity of each other’s “paths,” as well as cooperation to create a better future together through dialogue, can serve as stepping stones for resolving difficult challenges. Let us explore such forms of cooperation together.

As Paulo Coelho once said, “It’s one thing to feel that you are on the right path, but it’s another to think that yours is the only path.”

The basic premise for Japan’s “path” to resolving issues is diversity and inclusiveness. Through dialogue with our partners, Latin America and the Caribbean, we intend to prove that such an approach is indeed possible. Our cooperation will illuminate the “pathway” to a bright future for the world. Toward cooperation, not division and confrontation. Let us demonstrate this model to the world together.

4. Pathway to Japan-Latin America and the Caribbean cooperation

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now present my concrete visions, based on the three directions I have just mentioned, for the “pathway” that leads to “human dignity.”

(1) Ensuring the free and open international order based on the rule of law

First is ensuring the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit last year, the members shared the importance of upholding and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law, and of the principles of the UN Charter such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Yesterday, in my meeting with President Lula, we reflect on the outcomes of the summit and confirmed that we will further develop them

together.

To restore trust in multilateralism, we must urgently tackle global governance reform, which is also a focus for Brazil. We will work with Brazil and other Latin American and Caribbean countries to advance concrete actions for reform in order to strengthen the functions of the UN, especially realizing a UN Security Council that reflects the world today.

Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean are linked by the Pacific Ocean and the Panama Canal. Japan will make every effort to uphold and develop the open maritime order based on the rule of law, and provide support to ensure a safe and stable environment for using the canal with Japanese technology and financing.

Moreover, areas for cooperation between Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean go beyond land and sea, and extend into outer space, ICT and cyberspace. On this visit, I have confirmed with both Brazil and Paraguay that we will strengthen cooperation in such areas. Japan will continue to enhance our cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean to contribute to peace and stability in outer space and cyberspace.

Japan has also engaged in the peace and stability of the Latin America and the Caribbean region through its long-standing cooperation. The plight of Haiti is the greatest challenge facing the Western Hemisphere. Japan extends its support to improve security and governance and also implements humanitarian assistance to Haiti. On the issue of migration, a humanitarian issue that the international community needs to tackle together, Japan, bearing in mind perspectives relating to Women, Peace and Security (WPS), has extended support for migrant holding facilities and educational facilities, and provided assistance for the protection and empowerment of women. Regarding deteriorating security situations in the region, one of the root causes of migration, Japan has been implementing cooperation to introduce Japan's koban system in some of the countries of the region. Through

such cooperation, Japan will continue to support the rule of law and the realization of human dignity in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The key to ensuring that our cooperation actually bears fruit lies in the hands of the countries of the region. Japan respects your ownership and will promote cooperation in Japan's unique ways.

(2) Overcoming common challenges that humanity faces such as the environment and climate change

Second is overcoming common challenges that humanity faces such as the environment and climate change. Based on the successes of the Japan-Brazil Cooperation Program for Agricultural Development of the Cerrado Region (PRODECER), which was carried out over the course of more than 20 years, this time, I launched the "Japan-Brazil Green Partnership Initiative" with President Lula.

The vast expanse of the Amazon rain forest is also known as the "lungs of the planet." Japan has decided to contribute to the Amazon Fund, the first country in Asia to do so, to conserve the rain forest. We would like to add our efforts to those of the Brazilian people to protect, nurture, and live with the Amazon rain forest, utilizing Japan's advanced technologies such as remote sensing.

The impacts of climate change on small island states, including those of the Caribbean, are glaring. As a fellow island nation, Japan will provide cooperation that utilizes our own knowledge and experience, and also contribute to disaster risk reduction measures for the entire Caribbean region.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region rich in energy resources and also a key player for achieving decarbonization. Brazil's strengths in biofuels and synthetic fuels coupled with Japan's hybrid engines and other high-performance mobility equipment have tremendous potential. Leading up to COP30, which

Brazil will chair next year, we will demonstrate to the world the importance of an approach that recognizes the common goal of net-zero emissions and the diverse “pathways” that countries may follow in line with their national circumstances.

(3) Pursuing prosperity that can be shared by all people in the world and does not come at others’ expense

Third is pursuing prosperity that can be shared by all people in the world and does not come at others’ expense.

Over the past decade, the number of bases for Japanese companies operating in Latin America and the Caribbean has increased by more than 1,000. This figure demonstrates Japan’s great expectations for the future of the region’s economy.

Together with Latin America and the Caribbean, Japan aims to co-create a sustainable value chain. By creating new industries and generating stable, high-quality employment, the business activities of Japanese companies will contribute to eliminating disparities and poverty in the region. The Government will also support such businesses by Japanese companies.

Sustainability is an important concept in economic cooperation as well. In recent years, the “debt trap” has been seen as a problem around the world, and Japan will promote sustainable economic cooperation based on the situation in partner countries, including building quality infrastructure.

Furthermore, as we advance economic activities, by prioritizing the environment and human rights, we aim to achieve truly sustainable growth in collaboration with local communities. That is my vision for shared prosperity with Latin America and the Caribbean. Under this vision, acts such as economic coercion, where economic pressure is exerted to compel certain actions, are totally unacceptable.

(4) People-to-people ties

Lastly, what is indispensable for Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean to stride together towards common goals is people-to-people ties.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 3.1 million Nikkei continue to create new values, building on the trust in the Nikkei community that their ancestors and predecessors fostered, and they will lead the exchanges at all levels to new “pathways.” To support this tendency, we will implement exchange programs at a scale of 1,000 people over the next three years. I hope that by experiencing Japan for themselves, Nikkei, including those from the young generations, will be better able to share with the people of Latin America and the Caribbean the diverse appeals of Japan, while at the same time injecting some of their irrepressible vitality into Japanese society.

It is the ties between young people, those who will take us forward into the next generation, that are the key to create a new “pathway” of partnership between Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Japan, there is a famous poem about a “path,” penned by poet TAKAMURA Kotaro. By interesting coincidence, there is also a similar poem in Spanish by poet Antonio Machado.

“Traveler, there are no roads. Roads are made by walking.”

Our forefathers, whose journey started more than a century ago in the port of Santos, laid the foundations of the Brazilian Nikkei community that continues to this day, after traversing “paths” filled with hardship and challenges over many

years. Today, we are each walking our own “paths” in the increasingly uncertain international community. Our new “pathway” is also supported by the existence of partners with shared goals, and by hope for a future in which we can realize a world caring for human dignity.

The historic partnership between Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean will construct a new “pathway.” I believe that it can be a bright “pathway” that will lead the world, which currently stands on the brink of division and confrontation, towards cooperation. In fact, it is our responsibility to our children and grandchildren, and to the future, to make it so.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone that has welcomed me here once again on my visit to Latin America and the Caribbean. Inspired by the budding new cooperation that I have reaffirmed on this visit, I will take the lead in traversing a new “pathway” for Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Thank you very much. Gracias, aguyje, obrigado.