

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida's article contributed to EL COMERCIO, Peru  
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Peru is the country with which Japan has the longest relations in Latin America, and the year 2013 is a commemorative year that marks the 140th anniversary of Japan-Peru diplomatic relations. Moreover, Japanese immigration to Peru has the longest history in South America, stretching back to 1899, with the current Nikkei population in Peru estimated at 90,000. It is worth noting that April 3 is designated as the Celebration of the Peruvian-Japanese Friendship Day in Peru. Rarely can you find similar examples anywhere else in the world to commemorate friendship between two countries by setting a specific date like this. Based on these longstanding friendly and cooperative relations, Japan and Peru have forged closer relations in recent years, particularly economic relations, becoming mutually reliable win-win partners. This is epitomized by the entry into force of the Japan-Peru Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in March of last year. Japanese companies are expanding investment in Peru which has continued to register stable and continuous high growth. Culturally too, the two countries enjoy more than half a century of archaeology exchanges. Among the countless World Heritage sites located in Peru, the Machu Picchu captures the hearts of Japanese people and tops the list of World Heritage sites Japanese people wish to visit at least once in their lifetime.

Two years ago when Japan was struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake, we received invaluable assistance from Peru along with messages from Peruvian people expressing their wish to help Japan in some way. This is a testament to the sincere exchanges which take place between the peoples of our two countries and which delve deep into the hearts of people. For this, I would like to express my profound appreciation.

Today, democracy has firmly taken root in Latin America, and the region is a growth center for the global economy similar to Asia.

Sharing as we do basic values such as democracy and the rule of law, Latin America is regarded by Japan as an important partner in the international community. Japan and Latin America are engaged in close cooperation in responding to various issues that face the world, including climate change, disarmament and non-proliferation.

In the realm of economic relations, Latin America is a partner with which we will

develop together. Latin America has a growing market, with a population of 600 million people, and is also an important supplier of mineral and food resources to Japan. Over the last five years the number of Japanese companies operating in the region, including Peru, has increased by approximately 200. Japanese companies seek to identify models that enable the companies to develop together with the people of the countries in which they do business. By transferring advanced technologies and sharing business experience with the local population, Japanese companies are contributing to the mid- to long-term development of the countries of Latin America.

Japan shares the principle of “social inclusion” upheld by many countries in Latin America, including Peru. Japan is committed to continuing to extend detailed assistance to the region to eradicate poverty and eliminate disparities, to ensure that no one is left behind.

For Japan, Peru is a neighbor across the Pacific Ocean. As neighbors, I look forward to engaging in conversation with my Peruvian friends during the course of my visit, as I seek to take our longstanding partnership to even greater heights.<END>