

Section 4 Latin America and the Caribbean

1 Overview

(1) Japan's Positioning of Latin America and the Caribbean

As the free and open international order based on the rule of law faces serious challenges, many countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region place importance on values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. In recent years, strengthening cooperation with LAC countries that share these values and principles has become increasingly important for Japan. The LAC region, which has a population of approximately 660 million and a gross regional product of approximately 7.1 trillion U.S. dollars and continues to post positive economic growth, is an important market. The region is also rich in critical mineral resources, energy, and food resources, and is growing its international prominence from the perspective of strengthening supply chain resilience and economic security as well. On the other hand, in countries and regions where income inequality is severe, challenges persist, including the activities of criminal organizations such as drug cartels, a severe deterioration in public safety, irregular migration to North America, and the social integration of returning migrants, all of which also serve as impediments to further growth.

In the LAC region, there are the Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and their descendants) communities numbering approximately 3.1 million, or about 60% of the world's Nikkei population, who have fostered a traditional sense of affinity toward Japan in LAC countries through contributions to the local areas for more than a century. On the other hand, generations have transitioned over the 100 years since the Japanese migration began, and the challenge is how to maintain and deepen

ties between Japan and the communities going forward, including among the younger generation. From this perspective, in addition to programs inviting members of the Nikkei community to Japan and dispatching Japanese students (exchanges with Nikkei of the same generation), MOFA has been implementing measures to strengthen cooperation with the Nikkei communities, including supporting the holding of events by the Nikkei community in various countries to promote network-building.

(2) Japanese Diplomacy toward Latin America and the Caribbean Countries

Japan's diplomacy toward the LAC region has developed under the guiding principle of the three “Juntos!!” (meaning “together”)⁽¹⁾ since 2014. In 2024, Prime Minister Kishida gave a policy speech on the LAC region in Brazil entitled “Paving a Pathway to ‘Human Dignity’ with Latin America and the Caribbean,” updating Japan's guideline for the first time in a decade. In the speech, he outlined the following three key directions: (a) Ensuring the free and open international order based on the rule of law, (b) Overcoming common challenges that humanity faces such as the environment and climate change, and (c) Pursuing prosperity that can be shared by all people in the world and does not come at others' expense. Taking into account changes in the international community and the issues it faces, he indicated Japan's resolve to work together with LAC countries to open a new path through dialogue. In addition, in the same year, Foreign Minister Kamikawa announced the Diplomacy Initiative toward LAC in Panama. The initiative pursues new forms of cooperation with LAC countries by integrating themes of growing importance,

(1) This is the guiding philosophy of Japan's foreign policy toward LAC, advocated by Prime Minister Abe in 2014. The three “Juntos” (Together) refer to “Develop Together,” “Lead Together,” and “Inspire Together.”

such as the oceans and gender equality, as well as Japan's unique bond with the LAC region through the Nikkei community, into Japan's traditional diplomatic efforts. Under this guideline for LAC diplomacy and the initiative to implement it, Japan's diplomacy toward the LAC region deepened further in 2025.

In 2025, designated as the “Japan-Brazil Friendship and Exchange Year (the 130th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Brazil),” Japan hosted Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as a State Guest in March, during which a summit meeting was held between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Lula, among other engagements. The year also coincided with the “Japan-SICA (Central American Integration System) Friendship Year,” during which President César Bernardo Arévalo de León of Guatemala, President José Raúl Mulino Quintero of Panama, and Prime Minister John Briceño of Belize visited Japan. In addition, ministers from Costa Rica, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic also visited Japan, further deepening relations between Japan and Central America. On the occasion of the National Day ceremonies of the respective countries at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, held from April through October, 11 heads of state or government and 16 ministerial-level

dignitaries, including 13 foreign ministers, from the LAC region visited Japan, and meetings were held at various levels.

On the economic front, supply chain connections are being strengthened, including the continuing trend of increases in the number of Japanese companies operating in the LAC region, which reached 3,095 in 2024. Japan is working on promoting free trade together with LAC countries including through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), in which Mexico, Peru, and Chile also participate. In November of that year, the process began for Costa Rica's accession to the CPTPP, and in November 2025, it was decided that the process for Uruguay's accession to the Agreement would be initiated.

In the field of development cooperation, for some areas of the LAC region that have achieved economic growth, South-South cooperation is being accelerated by countries that have already “graduated” or will “graduate” from the status of recipient countries on the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List of ODA Recipients by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Japan is promoting triangular cooperation with these countries.

2 Regional Organizations

In addition to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC),⁽²⁾ the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), the following regional organizations in the LAC region conduct policy coordination on various issues.

(1) Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR)⁽³⁾

MERCOSUR comprises Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia (Venezuela is currently suspended), and with a few exceptions, tariffs have been eliminated for all goods traded within the region. Regarding the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, talks are

ongoing with the Republic of Korea (ROK), Canada, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), among others. In January 2026, however, MERCOSUR signed an FTA with the European Union (EU).

In regard to relations with Japan, at a summit meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil in March, the two leaders confirmed that the “Strategic Partnership Framework between Japan and MERCOSUR” would be launched at an early date, and that consultations toward deepening trade relations would be advanced under the Framework. In December, the launch of the Framework was announced at the MERCOSUR Summit, and in January 2026, the first meeting under the Framework was held.

(2) CELAC: Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States)

(3) MERCOSUR: Mercado Común del Sur (Common Market of the South)

(2) Caribbean Community (CARICOM)⁽⁴⁾

CARICOM was founded by 14 Caribbean nations and 1 territory for economic integration and foreign policy coordination. It has a large presence in the international arena due to its coordinated actions. Although CARICOM countries include many countries with relatively high incomes, they are threatened by natural disasters such as catastrophic hurricanes almost every year and also face vulnerabilities particular to small island states due to the small size of their populations and economies.

Japan is leading its diplomacy in accordance with the three pillars for Japan-CARICOM cooperation.⁽⁵⁾ Japan is also providing support to high-income level countries based on their development needs and economic capabilities.

(3) Central American Integration System (SICA)

SICA was established in 1992 with the aim of promoting the economic and social integration of the region and achieving peace, freedom, democracy, and development. Its eight member countries are El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize, and Honduras (Japan has been an external observer of SICA since 2010). In addition, since 1995, Japan has held policy consultations with SICA member countries through

the Japan-Central America Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation. In May 2025, the 19th Forum was held in Costa Rica.

In 2025, Japan marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of its diplomatic relations with five Central American countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica). Taking this as an opportunity, Japan also launched the “Japan-SICA Friendship Year 2025” with all eight SICA member countries — adding Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Belize — and deepened exchanges with the Central American region across a wide range of fields. (See the Column on page 132)

(4) Pacific Alliance

The Pacific Alliance aims to promote free mobility of goods, services, and more within the region and to build a foundation for expansion into the Asia-Pacific region. It is composed of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, with Singapore as an Associated State. Japan is an Observer State and places importance on cooperation with the group as it shares common values and principles. In December, under the “Juntos!! Japan-Latin America and the Caribbean exchange program,” government officials from Pacific Alliance member countries were invited to Japan, where they paid a courtesy call on State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao, among other activities.

3 LAC Countries

(1) Mexico

The administration of President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, which was inaugurated in October 2024, placed importance on domestic affairs such as combating corruption, correcting disparities, and improving security, continuing the approach of the previous administration. In June, judicial elections were held for all nine positions on the Supreme Court of Justice, among others.

In regard to relations with Japan, in August, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ERI Arfiya visited Mexico, served as the Japanese co-chair of

the 14th meeting of the Committee for the Improvement of the Business Environment, and held meetings with Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs María Teresa Mercado among others. In September, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who was visiting New York to attend the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, held a meeting with Secretary for Foreign Affairs Juan Ramon de la Fuente.

Regarding economic relations, Japanese companies have continued to expand into Mexico in the context of nearshoring (establishing supply sources close to consumer markets), reaching about 1,600 companies,

⁽⁴⁾ CARICOM: Caribbean Community (Member States and Territory: Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, Suriname, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Montserrat (British Overseas Territory))

⁽⁵⁾ The three pillars of Japan's CARICOM policy: “Cooperation toward sustainable development, including overcoming vulnerabilities specific to small island states,” “Expansion and deepening of exchanges and bonds of friendship,” and “Cooperation in addressing challenges in the international arena”

the highest number in the LAC region. During her August visit to Mexico, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Eri confirmed with Undersecretary for Foreign Trade Luis Rosendo Gutiérrez Romano the importance of regularly convening the Committee for the Improvement of the Business Environment, as well as their intention to cooperate toward further strengthening economic relations between Japan and Mexico.

With respect to relations with third countries, Mexico has traditionally placed importance on its relations with the United States (U.S.) and maintained a policy of coordination with LAC countries. Multiple summit telephone calls were held between Mexico and the U.S. In April, President Sheinbaum attended the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summit. President Sheinbaum was also invited to the G7 Kananaskis Summit in June, where she held summit meetings with Canada, the EU, India, and Germany. In August, she held a summit meeting with President Arévalo in Guatemala, and the two leaders concurred on cooperating in areas such as infrastructure development along the shared border.

(2) El Salvador

Against the backdrop of significant improvements in public security and other achievements, President Nayib Armando Bukele Ortez, who was re-elected with strong public support in 2024, has been focusing on economic measures, including the promotion of investment from Japan and other countries, as well as human resource development.

In regard to relations with Japan, as the year marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, various commemorative events were held in both countries. In Japan, exhibitions of works by Salvadoran artists and students commemorating the friendship between the two countries were held, among other activities. In San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, projection mapping was carried out as part of the Japan Fest. These activities served to deepen exchanges between the two countries.

(3) Cuba

Cuba is facing an extremely severe economic situation, particularly in its key industry of tourism, and the lives of the Cuban people have become increasingly difficult

due to large-scale power outages, water shortages, natural disasters, and other hardships.

In regard to relations with Japan, in May, the 17th Japan-Cuba Policy Dialogue was held in Havana, during which both countries confirmed the long-standing friendship between the two nations and exchanged views on cooperation in the international arena, among other topics. In July, Vice Prime Minister Eduardo Martínez visited Japan to participate in Cuba's National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and the fourth Japan-Cuba Joint Public-Private Committee Meeting was held in Tokyo in the presence of the Vice Prime Minister.

(4) Guatemala

Guatemala has the largest population and economy in Central America. The administration of President César Bernardo Arévalo de León, which was inaugurated in 2024, worked on fighting corruption, poverty reduction, and correcting disparities.

In regard to relations with Japan, as the year marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations, bilateral activities commenced with the holding of the first Japan-Guatemala Policy Consultation in January. In June, on the occasion of Guatemala's National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, President Arévalo de León and Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlos Ramiro Martínez visited Japan and held meetings with Prime Minister Ishiba and Foreign Minister Iwaya, respectively. At the summit meeting, the two leaders concurred on positioning Japan-Guatemala relations under a new "Strategic Partnership," and signed a Japan-Guatemala Joint Statement.

(5) Costa Rica

Under the administration of President Rodrigo Chaves, which was inaugurated in 2022, Costa Rica has maintained stable economic growth, with the export of medical devices experiencing rapid growth in recent years against the backdrop of the country's preeminent social welfare system and high level of education in Central America. In addition, in 2025, Costa Rica served as Chair of the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting.

In regard to relations with Japan, as the year marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship Arnoldo André and Minister of



Japan-Costa Rica Foreign Ministers' Meeting (September 26, New York, U.S.)

Foreign Trade Manuel Tovar visited Japan in April, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya, and signed a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the Japan-Costa Rica Policy Consultation. In addition, a Japan-Costa Rica Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held on the occasion of the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in September.

(6) Dominican Republic

Under the second-term administration of President Luis Rodolfo Abinader Corona, which was inaugurated in 2024, the Dominican Republic demonstrated strong economic growth centered on its key industry of tourism. Meanwhile, the issue of illegal immigration from neighboring Haiti remains a major concern, and the government has called for engagement from the international community while strengthening domestic countermeasures.

In regard to relations with Japan, following a nightclub ceiling collapse incident in Santo Domingo in April, Foreign Minister Iwaya sent a message of condolence to Foreign Minister Roberto Álvarez. In addition, on the occasion of the Dominican Republic's National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai in August, Minister of the Presidency José Ignacio Paliza visited Japan and paid a courtesy call on Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa. An investment promotion seminar for Japanese companies was also held in Tokyo, among other activities.

(7) Nicaragua

A constitutional amendment in February introduced a co-presidency system, creating a two-person leadership structure of Co- President Daniel Ortega and



Minister of the Presidency of the Dominican Republic Paliza pays a courtesy call on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi (August 20, Tokyo)

Co-President Rosario Murillo Zambrana. Along with the introduction of the co-presidency system, the presidential term, which had previously been five years, was extended to six years.

In regard to relations with Japan, when a delegation led by the mayor of Kanra Town, Gunma Prefecture — which had served as a Host Town during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games — visited Nicaragua in November, sports exchanges through karate and exchanges with local government bodies were conducted with the cooperation of the Embassy of Japan in Nicaragua.

(8) Haiti

In Haiti, since the assassination of the president in 2021, administrative and legislative functions have not been sufficiently operational, and armed groups (gangs) have expanded their influence, particularly in the capital region, causing security to deteriorate to an extreme degree. In response, in June 2024, at the request of the Government of Haiti, a Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission began operations based on a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution.



Japan-Haiti Summit Meeting (October 9, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

Furthermore, in September 2025, the UNSC approved the transition of the mission to a Gang Suppression Force (GSF). Japan has also been providing assistance focused on the areas of security, governance, and humanitarian affairs with a view to stabilizing Haiti.

In October 2025, on the occasion of Haiti's National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, President of the Transitional Presidential Council (TPC) Anthony Franck Laurent Saint-Cyr visited Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. At that meeting, President of the TPC Saint-Cyr expressed gratitude for Japan's long-standing bilateral assistance and efforts toward the stabilization of Haiti.

(9) Panama

Under the administration of President José Raúl Mulino Quintero, which was inaugurated in 2024, Panama worked on fiscal consolidation, economic revitalization, social security reform, and strengthening measures against irregular migration, among other priorities. On the diplomatic front, Panama engaged in close dialogue with the U.S., including by receiving visits from U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, while also working to strengthen relations with the EU and MERCOSUR. In the international arena, Panama has been serving as a non-permanent member of the UNSC since 2025 (term: 2025 to 2026).

In regard to relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Eri visited Panama in July and paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Javier Martínez-Acha, among other activities. In September, President Mulino, Foreign Minister Martínez-Acha, and others visited Japan on the occasion of Panama's National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held meetings with Prime Minister Ishiba and Foreign Minister Iwaya, respectively, at which both countries concurred on further strengthening bilateral relations across a wide range of fields.

(10) Belize

The second-term administration of President John Antonio Briceño, which entered office following its victory in the general election held in March, has been working on raising the minimum wage, crime prevention, and improving access to education.

In regard to relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Eri visited Belize in May and paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Briceño and Foreign Minister Francis Fonseca. In August, Prime Minister Briceño visited Japan on the occasion of Belize's National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, at which the two leaders concurred on developing bilateral relations across a wide range of fields, including economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

(11) Honduras

President Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, who took office in 2022 as the country's first female president, actively worked on healthcare, education, and infrastructure development. In the presidential election held in November, Nasry Asfura, the candidate of the National Party, won the election with the support of the public, having campaigned on pledges including regional development.

In regard to relations with Japan, as the year marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina García visited Japan in April, and Foreign Minister Javier Efraín Bú Soto visited Japan in October to attend Honduras's National Day ceremony event at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. Each held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya and concurred on further strengthening of bilateral relations.



Japan-Honduras Foreign Ministers' Meeting (October 8, Tokyo)

(12) Argentina

President Javier Milei, who took office in December 2023, worked on fiscal austerity and deregulation with a view to economic and fiscal reform, which he

prioritizes as his top domestic policy issue. In the mid-term elections in October, the ruling party significantly increased its number of seats. However, difficulties in parliamentary management as a minority government have continued, and reducing the poverty rate, continuing deregulation, and achieving economic growth that the public can feel have been cited as ongoing challenges.

In regard to relations with Japan, when Vice Minister of Economy (Industry and Trade) Esteban Marzorati visited Japan in May, he paid a courtesy call on Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Eri, and as important “strategic partners” sharing values and principles, the two concurred on strengthening bilateral relations, including through the Nikkei community and other channels, as well as on the strengthening of relations with MERCOSUR.

(13) Uruguay

The center-left administration of President Yamandú Orsi, which was inaugurated in March, has been focusing on improving public security — which had been cited as a challenge of the previous administration — and has maintained a relatively high approval rating. Uruguay ranks first in the LAC region in the Democracy Index.⁽⁶⁾ In economic policy, the administration adheres to free trade principles and places importance on market expansion and liberalization. At the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Commission meeting in November, it was decided that Uruguay's accession process to the CPTPP would commence.

In regard to relations with Japan, MATSUSHIMA Midori, a member of the House of Representatives, attended President Orsi's inauguration ceremony as Special Envoy, conveyed Japan's congratulations to the President, and at their meeting both sides concurred on further strengthening favorable bilateral relations. In October, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Valeria Csukasi visited Japan, and the fourth Japan-Uruguay Policy Consultation and the second Japan-Uruguay Joint Committee were held, during which discussions were conducted across a wide range of fields.

(14) Ecuador

In April, a presidential election runoff was held upon the expiration of the term inherited from former President Guillermo Lasso, and President Daniel Noboa Azín won by a large margin and was re-elected. Pledging a pro-U.S. stance, a liberal economic policy, and trade diversification, he has been pursuing fiscal austerity in cooperation with international organizations and others.

In regard to relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Eri attended President Noboa's inauguration ceremony in May as Special Envoy and paid courtesy calls on President Noboa and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility Gabriela Sommerfeld, among other activities. In July, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility Sommerfeld visited Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya, and both sides confirmed their intention to further strengthen bilateral relations. In August, President Noboa visited Japan, held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba,



Japan-Ecuador Summit Meeting (August 28, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)



Japan-Ecuador Foreign Ministers' Meeting (July 23, Tokyo)

(6) Source: Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2024

and confirmed the strengthening of bilateral cooperation across a wide range of fields.

(15) Colombia

The administration of President Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego, which was inaugurated in August 2022, bills itself as Colombia's first left-wing government, a "government of change," but the administration's cohesion has weakened due to repeated cabinet reshuffles and other factors, and difficult parliamentary management has continued due to conflicts within the ruling coalition. In addition, while the administration has been continuing peace negotiations with armed groups in the country, including the National Liberation Army (ELN), no path toward comprehensive peace has been established.

In regard to relations with Japan, in January, Senator MATSUYAMA Masaji visited Colombia as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister, held a meeting with President Petro, delivered a personal letter from the Prime Minister, and confirmed the further strengthening of bilateral relations. Taking the opportunity of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Foreign Minister Laura Camila Sarabia Torres visited Japan in April and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya, during which views were exchanged on cooperation across a wide range of fields. In September, President Petro visited Japan, held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, and confirmed the strengthening of bilateral cooperation in areas including the economy, next-generation energy, the Colombia peace process, and cooperation in the international arena.



Japan-Colombia Summit Meeting (September 4, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)



Japan-Chile Summit Meeting (May 11, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

(16) Chile

The administration of President Gabriel Boric, which was inaugurated in March 2022, aims to reduce disparities and improve welfare, and is touting promotion of reform of social security policies, including pensions and the tax system. In December, a presidential election runoff was held upon the expiration of President Gabriel Boric Font's term. The election campaign focused on public security and immigration issues, and José Antonio Kast Rist, the candidate of the opposition Republican Party, who ran on a platform of hardline policies including the deportation of undocumented migrants and the construction of large-scale prisons, defeated Jeannette Jara, the ruling coalition's unified candidate (Communist Party), and won the election (scheduled to take office in March 2026).

In regard to relations with Japan, in May, President Boric visited Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. The two leaders concurred on strengthening cooperation across a wide range of fields between the two countries, which are strategic partners sharing values, including in areas such as the economy, mining, disaster risk reduction, and space and astronomy. In addition, a foreign ministers' meeting was held between Foreign Minister Alberto Leo van Klaveren Strok, who visited Japan accompanying the President, and Foreign Minister Iwaya, and both parties concurred on further strengthening bilateral cooperation across a wide range of fields going forward.

(17) Paraguay

President Santiago Peña Palacios, who took office in August 2023, continues to uphold values and principles such as the rule of law and respect for human



Japan-Paraguay Summit Meeting (May 21, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

rights. He promotes a free and open economic policy, focusing on attracting investment and job creation.

In regard to relations with Japan, in May, President Peña visited Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba. The two leaders witnessed the signing and exchange ceremonies for documents relating to the establishment of the Japan-Paraguay Policy Consultation and the short-stay visa exemption measure for holders of ordinary Paraguayan passports, positioned bilateral relations as a “strategic partnership,” and announced that an agreement in principle had been reached on the Japan-Paraguay Investment Agreement. In addition, a foreign ministers’ meeting was held between Foreign Minister Rubén Darío Ramírez Lezcano, who visited Japan accompanying the President, and Foreign Minister Iwaya, and both parties concurred on further strengthening bilateral relations.

(18) Brazil

The administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has been working on strengthening social security and tax reform while actively pursuing its foreign policy agenda. In addition, positioning environmental and climate change countermeasures as an important policy issue, it hosted the 30th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP30) in Belém in November.

In regard to relations with Japan, as the year marked the 130th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Brazil and was designated as the “Japan-Brazil Friendship and Exchange Year,” President Lula visited Japan in March as the first State Guest in the post-COVID-19 era. President Lula held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba,



Prime Minister Ishiba welcomes President Lula of Brazil (March 26, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

and the two leaders announced the “Strategic and Global Partnership Action Plan Japan-Brazil (2025-2030),” which sets out the actions the two countries will undertake over the next five years.

In addition, in terms of economic relations, dialogue aimed at strengthening economic ties has been active in both the public and private sectors, including the holding of the 13th Wise Group Meeting for Strategic Economic Partnership between Japan and Brazil in April and the 26th Japan-Brazil Business Council Plenary Meeting in September.

(19) Venezuela

In the presidential election held in July 2024, incumbent President Nicolas Maduro declared victory. However, the transparency of the electoral process, including the vote count, was questioned both domestically and internationally.

In January 2025, in response to the Venezuelan government proceeding with the presidential inauguration ceremony and President Maduro taking the oath of office without having fulfilled adequate accountability, Japan issued a Statement by the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, strongly calling for the early and peaceful restoration of democracy in Venezuela through the broad participation of all relevant parties, and the resolution of the various issues involved. At the same time, Japan expressed concern that the deterioration of the current economic and social situation in Venezuela is having a serious impact on Venezuelan citizens who are in particularly vulnerable circumstances, and that the situation — including the outflow of displaced persons — is having a regional impact encompassing neighboring countries. Based on

the concept of human security,⁽⁷⁾ Japan continues to provide assistance to Venezuelan citizens, including displaced persons, as well as to neighboring countries affected by the situation.

In January 2026, President Maduro and his spouse were detained through a U.S. military operation, and in the same month, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez assumed the role of Acting President. While the U.S. has indicated its intention to advance the democratization of Venezuela in three phases — “stabilization of the country,” including management of oil revenues, “recovery,” including equitable market access and the initiation of a reconciliation process, and “government transition” — the Rodríguez interim administration has indicated its willingness to cooperate with the U.S.

(20) Peru

In October, criticism of the administration's security measures and other policies intensified against the backdrop of a deteriorating security situation, and President Boluarte was impeached by Peru's Congress. President José Enrique Jerí Oré, who newly assumed office in accordance with constitutional provisions, has described his administration as a transitional and national reconciliation government, and has declared combating criminal organizations, revitalizing the economy, and holding free, fair, and transparent general elections as priority areas.

In regard to relations with Japan, in February, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Eri visited Peru for purposes including follow-up to Prime Minister Ishiba's visit to Peru in November of the previous year, and held a meeting with Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Peter Camino, among other activities. In August, President Boluarte visited Japan to attend the Peru National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, and the two leaders concurred on further deepening cooperation across a wide range of fields based on the roadmap for strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership. In addition, Foreign Minister Elmer Schialer, who visited Japan accompanying the President, held a foreign ministers' meeting with

Foreign Minister Iwaya, and both foreign ministers confirmed their intention to continue promoting further cooperation going forward.



Japan-Peru Foreign Ministers' Meeting (August 8, Tokyo)

(21) Bolivia

In August, the first round of the presidential election was held, and in October, a runoff election was held in which candidate Rodrigo Paz Pereira of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), described as centrist and center-right, won, bringing an end to a left-wing government that had continued for approximately 20 years. Immediately after his inauguration ceremony, President Paz announced the full restoration of diplomatic relations with the U.S. and emphasized an open-to-the-world foreign policy orientation.

The Government of Japan provided emergency relief supplies in response to flood damage caused by heavy rainfall occurring between March and April, in view of humanitarian considerations and the friendly relations between Japan and Bolivia. In April, Vice President David Choquehuanca Cespedes visited Japan to attend Bolivia's National Day ceremony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, and held a meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and a meeting with the Japan-Bolivia Friendship Parliamentary League, among other activities. At the Bolivian presidential inauguration ceremony held in November, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Horii attended as Special Envoy, conveyed Japan's congratulations directly to President Paz, and the two concurred on working closely together to further advance bilateral relations.

(7) Human security is a concept that pursues freedom from fear and want, and the right of individuals to live happily and in dignity through their protection and empowerment.

Column

Japan-SICA Friendship Year 2025 — Partners Across the Pacific Ocean —



■ History between Japan and Central America

Japan has long fostered friendly and cooperative relations with the countries of the Central American region — which bridges North and South America, as well as the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans — across a broad range of fields, including politics, the economy, development cooperation, and culture. In 2025, Japan and the five Central American countries — El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Honduras — marked the 90th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations in 1935. Japan and the member countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA),¹ comprising a total of eight countries including the aforementioned five along with the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Belize, designated this milestone year “Japan-SICA Friendship Year 2025,” and deepened their friendly and cooperative relations through a variety of projects and activities.

■ Conducting “Expo Diplomacy” on the Occasion of the “Friendship Year”

Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan served as an excellent opportunity to deepen relations between Japan and Central American countries. Guatemala, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Honduras, and others participated in Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, introducing their rich natural environments and diverse cultures and histories. Moreover, on the occasion of their respective National Days at the Expo and other opportunities, President César Bernardo Arévalo de León of Guatemala, President José Raúl Mulino Quintero of Panama, and Prime Minister John Antonio Briceño of Belize visited Japan, and ministers from Honduras, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic also visited Japan, deepening their respective countries’ relations with Japan. The “Expo Diplomacy” carried out during the “Friendship Year” also played a significant role in promoting friendly relations between Japan and the Central American countries.



Japan-Guatemala Summit Meeting (June 10)



Japan-Belize Summit Meeting (August 4)



Japan-Panama Summit Meeting (September 5)

(All held in Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

■ Promotion of Policy Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

In addition to high-level dialogue through the exchange of dignitaries, policy dialogue also progressed. In May, Japan and SICA member countries held the 19th Japan-SICA Forum for “Dialogue and Cooperation” in San José, Costa Rica. At the forum, high appreciation and gratitude were expressed for Japan’s support to date, and wide-ranging exchanges of views took place, including on shared perceptions of the international situation and cooperation on various challenges facing the international community.

Moreover, numerous commemorative events were held throughout the year, as part of the Friendship Year, promoting mutual understanding. In Central American countries, a wide range of public diplomacy and cultural projects were implemented, including concerts by Japanese artists, Japanese cultural festivals, *Awa Odori* dance performances, film screenings, and cultural lectures, as well as martial arts and sports exchange programs, port calls by the Japan Self-Defense Forces’ training vessel squadron, and peace memorial events to learn about the experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Japan as well, projects promoting friendly relations with Central American countries were carried out, such as a project highlighting connections with these countries through coffee.



Commemorative Concert “J-Pop *acústico* by Shihori” at the National Theatre of Costa Rica (February 21, San José, Costa Rica; Photo: National Theatre of Costa Rica)

¹ SICA: *Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana*

Column

Japan-Brazil Friendship Exchange Year (the 130th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Brazil)



On November 5, 1895, Japan and Brazil concluded the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, thereby establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. In 1908, Japanese emigration to Brazil began, and thereafter, Japanese immigrants and their descendants (Nikkei) formed the world's largest Nikkei community in Brazil. Today, approximately 2.7 million Japanese-Brazilians live in Brazil and 210,000 Brazilians reside in Japan. This special people-to-people exchange has served to solidify the bond between the two countries. Furthermore, since 2014, the two countries have been deepening their bilateral relations as Strategic and Global Partners, sharing values and principles such as freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. This partnership extends not only to politics, economy, and people-to-people exchange, but across a wide range of areas including public security, disaster risk reduction, criminal justice, the environment, and education.

The year 2025 marked the 130th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Brazil, which share deep historical ties. Designating the year as the “Japan-Brazil Friendship Exchange Year,” the two countries concurred on promoting cooperation in various fields, including cultural, tourism, and sports exchanges, as well as support for Japanese language education as a foundation for such exchanges. In this milestone year, Japan welcomed President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil as a State Guest in March. In addition, Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino visited Brazil in June and interacted with locals across eight cities (São Paulo, Maringá, Rolândia, Londrina, Campo Grande, Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and Foz do Iguaçu) over 11 days.



Her Imperial Highness Princess Kako of Akishino's visit to Brazil (June 9, Londrina, Brazil)

In addition, in commemoration of the “Japan-Brazil Friendship Exchange Year,” more than 200 events were held in Japan and over 550 events were held in Brazil. In Japan, the Asakusa Samba Carnival Parade Contest, marking its 40th edition in 2025, was held as part of these commemorative events and drew approximately 470,000 participants. In Brazil, singer AIKAWA Nanase, appointed as “Goodwill Ambassador for the Japan-Brazil Friendship Exchange Year,” participated in the 21st Londrina Festival and delivered a live performance that electrified the audience. Her song is used for “Matsuri Dance” (an original dance performed with J-POP hits and Japanese traditional drums) and is widely popular in Brazil.

The friendship cultivated through the “Japan-Brazil Friendship Exchange Year” is further solidifying the relationship of trust built over 130 years between the governments and peoples of the two countries, bridging geographical distance. It is expected that bilateral relations will continue to develop even further, with this relationship of trust as their foundation.



Appointment of AIKAWA Nanase as “Goodwill Ambassador for the Japan-Brazil Friendship Exchange Year” (May 26, Tokyo)



Diplomats from both countries participating in the 40th Asakusa Samba Carnival Parade Contest (August 30, Asakusa, Tokyo)