

CONFERENCE ON COLOMBIA'S FOREIGN POLICY
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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF COLOMBIA
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honor for me to be here with you today at the Sophia University in Tokyo, to which I sincerely want to express my appreciation for inviting me to share with you some reflections about the place we believe Colombia should have in the international stage, the responsibilities it has as a part of the international community, our country's vision on some of the most important matters of the current global agenda and, of course, to exchange some ideas about the bilateral relation between Colombia and Japan and the opportunities to strengthen it.

This is a valuable chance to highlight the importance of the traditional relation of friendship between Colombia and Japan, our oldest partner in the Asia-Pacific region. Specially this year, when we are celebrating 110 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

But this is also a particularly special opportunity for me, on a personal level, because of the great affection that I have to this country and this University.

My first experience in the foreign service was precisely my designation in 1979 as the Colombian Consul in Tokyo and, later on, I had the honor to serve as Chargé d'affaires a.i. at the Colombian Embassy in Japan. At that time, I learnt firsthand the enormous potential of our bilateral relation and became utterly convinced of the necessity of realizing that potential together.

There is a very special place in my heart and mind for the fond memories of the 6 years that I lived here in Japan. It was a time that allowed me to discover this country, its history, economy and culture, its institutions, and, more importantly, the tenacity and sensitivity of its people.

Furthermore, I had the fortune to carry out postgraduate studies at one of its most prestigious higher education institutions, precisely here, at Sophia University, to which I return today as a son who comes back home, feeling the same way I felt the first time I was here.

I was, at that time, like one of the 9 Colombian students currently studying in these classrooms. I specially want to greet them today and let them know that they represent the human capital of our country, the intellectual and scientific curiosity that lies at the heart of our bet on innovation and creativity. We count on them to keep building our country. Colombia needs them, awaits them and counts on them.

Serving Colombia from the nation of the rising sun has been, without any doubt, one of the most enriching and gratifying experiences of my life as a diplomat. That is why I am so happy to come back today, four decades later, as Minister of Foreign Affairs of my country.

Today we will have the opportunity to talk about the foreign policy of President Duque's Government, the immediate challenges that we face and the utmost importance that we give to our projection to the Asia-Pacific, built upon the excellent relations we have with our friends in this region, of which the oldest, and perhaps the closest, is Japan.

Colombia's place in the world

President Duque's Government has received the democratic mandate to build, over the next four years and with the participation of all Colombians, a more equitable country, through legality and entrepreneurship, based on innovation and sustainability.

This goal will also guide the external (foreign) action of Colombia. We will develop a foreign policy with a global perspective but profoundly articulated with the tasks and challenges imposed to us by the duty of perfecting our institutions, promoting the development of our economy, through the generation of new wealth, and offering more Colombians the benefits and opportunities of social progress.

To achieve these objectives, our country will participate responsibly and proactively in the international stage in defense of the international stability and security; will contribute creatively to the collective construction of appropriate responses to the most important global challenges; and will strategically diversify its foreign affairs agenda, identifying new opportunities and scenarios, finding new partners and deepening its ties with traditional friends and allies, such as Japan.

In today's world, the actors that participate in international relations have multiplied. There is a deeper interconnectivity in key dimensions of the economic, political, social and cultural life. Borders have become increasingly permeable and the distinction between the international and the intern does not exist any longer. All of this generates challenges that can hardly be faced in a unilateral manner.

Therefore, we believe in the need and utility of a system of international governance that is plural and multidimensional, innovative and effective, that both facilitates the management of international affairs and contributes to consolidate the national capacities to deal with society's demands and provide welfare. Building this governance system demands revising the existing institutions and to push for their reform whenever necessary, in order to make them more functional and effective, and will also demand the creation of new institutions to face new challenges. Colombia will not be a passive spectator in this process.

We will focus our energies in strengthening governance in our country and, from there, contribute to the development of a successful global governance.

Colombia is not a powerful country, in the traditional sense, but it has been a leader and a main actor in different affairs of the international agenda. We are going to consolidate that leadership and join our efforts with the rest of the international community with the goal of a better world for everyone: more secure and stable, with more opportunities, taking greater advantage of our points of convergence and constructively solving our differences.

We look with interest at the geopolitical, economic and cultural changes that are taking place all over the world. We are aware that the world is facing new and unprecedented tasks, and that every member of the international community is been called upon to positively contribute in dealing with the challenges that will shape our future.

Some immediate tasks and their implication for Colombia's foreign policy

President Ivan Duque has been leading the Colombian Government for merely four months. We have received a country that has made significant advances during the last 20 years but we have also found some tasks that we are dealing with immediately.

To begin with, as many of you know, two years ago, the former Government of Colombia signed a Final Agreement with the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) guerilla. We are committed with the implementation of that Agreement. This has been remarked by President Duque before the international community and all our actions and efforts are on this line.

Nevertheless, the process of implementation that we have encountered is fragile. Its strengths have been overestimated and its weaknesses underestimated, situation that we informed the UN Security Council last September. Still, we highly appreciate the support we have received from the international community through

the establishment of the UN Verification Mission, upon request of Colombia, by the UN Security Council, with the backing of all its members, including Japan, in his condition and non-permanent member between 2016 and 2017.

As pointed out by President Duque on his inauguration day, we have the will and we will do everything we can to give those who have betted on a genuine reincorporation to legality, bound by the principles of truth, justice, reparation and no repetition, the due opportunities for progress and protection, despite the flaws that currently affect the process.

We are going to fix those flaws and overcome the difficulties, but this will imply making adjustments and modifications to the implementation process of the Final Agreement, which will be made according to our Constitution and our laws, based on political and social agreement.

We know the international community understands the importance of making those adjustments and will continue supporting us in dealing successfully with the problems we have identified. We need to solve these issues in order to achieve stabilization and pacific coexistence in our country, which, in term, will contribute to international peace and security.

To accomplish this purpose, it is imperative that we give a new boost to the global effort to face to World Drug Problem. During the last few years, a significant increase of the area of illicit crops have occurred in Colombia and that is a cause of great concern to us.

Drug trafficking has been one of the main causes of violence in Colombia. This illegal activity finances terrorism and stimulates corruption and other forms of transnational organized crime. Drug trafficking endangers our societies and the future of generations to come.

Historically Colombia has made an enormous effort to fight drug trafficking and has resisted with strength the threat of crime and violence. We are going to face the current situation with the same determination and courage. That is why we will promote a reflection and a more effective global action against the World Drug Problem, with a multidimensional and integral approach, based on the principle of common and shared responsibility and taking into account all the links in the chain of transnational organized crime, specially money laundering.

We know that Japan shares this concerns with us.

Dear friends:

Allow me to refer to a matter that has the utmost relevance in the current Latin-

American agenda, as well as in our foreign policy, and that has been gaining importance in the global agenda for the last couple of years: the political, economic and humanitarian crisis in our neighbor country, Venezuela.

This crisis has generated an unprecedented migratory flow in our region. More than a million migrants from Venezuela have arrived to Colombia, especially during the last year and a half. This flow is comprised of pendulum migrants, migrants in transit to other countries, migrants with the intention of staying in Colombia rather permanently and Colombian returnees.

We have responded to this massive migration with solidarity and responsibility. The response has been articulated in three levels: national, regional and multilateral.

At the national level, we have given immediate humanitarian aid to the migrants, despite the budgetary restrictions and deploying the capabilities of the Central and regional governments to their limit. It is an effort in which we have been backed by companies and organizations of the civil society.

Last November we adopted a policy document (CONPES 3950), encompassing strategies for the assistance of migrants on critical issues such as health, education, childhood, adolescence, youth, water supply, housing and employment. Implementing this policy will cost over USD\$ 150 million until 2021.

In the regional and multilateral level, we have promoted the creation of a financial platform to facilitate countries like Colombia the access, in favorable conditions, to the necessary resources to deal with this crisis.

No single State is prepared to appropriately respond to migratory flows of this dimension in such a short period of time. This flows and their effects overcome the individual capabilities of any country and, therefore, a collective response is necessary to achieve the objective of an orderly, secure and regularized migration.

Thus, we have participated in the so-called Quito Process, in which 10 countries recently adopted an Action Plan regarding the human mobility of Venezuelans in the region. Similarly, with the objective of constructing a common position, we have supported the creation of task group in the framework of the OAS that will deliver a briefing with their recommendations shortly.

We worked towards and accomplish the appointment of a UNHCR and IOM joint special representative for Venezuelan migrants and refugees with the objective of coordinating the multilateral action. We also have advance significantly in the acknowledgement of the regional nature of this migratory crisis and of the importance of approaching it with coordination, cooperation, convergence and co-responsibility.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I have pointed out three priority matters for Colombia's foreign policy that concern our most immediate national interest, but that are related to global governance too. These are:

1. The importance of stabilization and pacific coexistence in every nation, as source of international stability and security
2. The necessity of facing transnational organized crime through articulated efforts, growing harmonization of laws, greater law enforcement cooperation and recognizing the multidimensionality of its impact in society.
 - In this area, the fight against corruption is a major concern and a priority issue for our foreign policy. According with some scholars, corruption may represent 5% of global GDP. Colombia is willing to lead a global effort against this problem.
 - In this regard, we promoted jointly with Peru, a special dedicated session of the United Nations General Assembly to study and find improved global tools and coordination efforts.
3. The imperative of building effective and efficient international and regional regimes to deal with the shared challenges, synchronizing efforts, multiplying capacities and coordinating responses.

In this and in other fields; such as adaptation and mitigation of climate change, the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity, and sustainable development; Colombia expects to keep playing responsibly its role as a member of the international community and promoting its interest constructively.

Colombia's projection to the Asia – Pacific

Dear friends:

Given its location, Colombia is, at the same time, Andean, Pacific, Caribbean and Amazonian. This creates many opportunities for projecting our country to the world, which we are interested in taking advantage of, by building more solid and deeper relations with other countries, based on a diversified agenda.

One of the distinctive traces of the XXI century is the "return" of Asia to the center stage of the political and economic global scenario. This "return" occurs while the Pacific becomes one of the gravity centers of world geopolitics.

Colombia has 1.300 kilometers of coast in the Pacific Ocean, a region with a great ethnic, cultural, and natural wealth. There you can find the Department (State) of

Chocó, one of the most biodiverse zones of the world, the city of Cali, the fourth most important of Colombia, and Buenaventura, the most important port in our country.

Unfortunately, in the Colombian Pacific you can also find some of the poorest zones of our country.

In this context, projecting Colombia to the Pacific is both an imperative and an opportunity that we must take advantage of. That's why Colombia has been making efforts to increase its relations with the Asia-Pacific region at the bilateral and multilateral level.

For instance, one of the objectives for the creation of the Pacific Alliance was to build a platform to boost the insertion of our economies in this new global pole, The Pacific. Not in vain since 2013, Japan is an Observer State of this mechanism. We are firmly committed to this innovative and promising strategy of integration and trade liberalization as a way to improve our competitiveness and productivity, enhance our intra-regional trade and our participation in the global markets and potentiate our relations with the countries in the other side of the Pacific.

Through the Pacific Alliance, Colombia has tried to get closer to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. With ASEAN we share common areas of interest that allow us to develop programs for joint work in areas such as education, trade, sustainable development, science and technology. The cooperation agenda between the two integration mechanisms is of the utmost benefit for both parts.

Colombia has also approached the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum - APEC. Though we are not a member State, we actively participate as guests in the Working Groups of Services, Tourism, SMEs, Foreign Direct Investment and the Sub Committee of Customs Procedures.

We have great interest in maintaining and deepening our level of participation in this Forum, that is truly an extraordinary stage for exchanging experiences and developing cooperation activities in trade, SMEs, E Commerce, among others.

In addition, Colombia participates in the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC/FOCALAE), with other 19 Latin-American States and 16 from East Asia. Colombia has had a very active participation in this Forum, for example, by granting scholarships to Asian students, including dozens of Chinese students, to learn Spanish - the García Márquez' Spanish - as foreign language.

Perhaps the XXI century is the century of the Pacific, of Asia, of Latin America, and, therefore, Colombia's too.

The importance of the relation between Colombia and Japan

Dear friends:

In our projection towards Asia-Pacific, our relation with Japan has a forefront place. Over time we have built a common agenda with ties that connect us in different matters: political, commercial, educational, investment, cooperation, among others.

However, there is still room to build a much closer and more dynamic relation. In the next few years, we want to achieve a broader and denser bilateral relation, both by diversifying the agenda and enhancing our joint work in the common areas on interest.

The strengthening of the bilateral relation must aim essentially to establish a society, a broader partnership between Colombia and Japan, that nourishes on what we have already built and takes advantage of the full potential of our relation.

Regarding political matters, and in order to jointly review the state of the bilateral relation, we expect to continue the annual frequency of the high level visits, as it has been done in the last few years. These encounters between high level officials of Colombia and Japan, whether in Bogotá or Tokyo, or in the framework of a multilateral forum, allow us to closely review the state of our relations and to join efforts to improve them.

The cooperation we have received from Japan has been very fruitful. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) established its office in Colombia almost four decades ago, precisely the same year in which I began my duties as Consul in Tokyo. Japan's support has been of the utmost importance in areas such as disaster prevention, environment, security, education and local development and has directly contributed to enhance the development of our country and the well-being of all Colombians.

The purpose of my visit to Japan is to extend you an invitation to be our partners, not just only our donors. Be our partners in the path towards the stabilization of peace through legality and entrepreneurship, that lead to equity.

Be our partners through direct investment and the development of business activities, by supporting new start-ups in the search of new opportunities. Be our partners through the transfer and creation of knowledge. Be our partners through the promotion of scientific and technological projects. Be our partners in the building of a binational academic and student community both dynamic and fluid.

There are several sectors in which Japanese companies invest in Colombia. Since the 1950s, six of the biggest business groups (Keiretsus) from Japan have been

present in our country: Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Itochu, Marubeni, Sumitomo and Toyota Tsusho. These and 85 other Japanese companies in different sectors and in different cities are contributing to the generation of employment and the dynamism of our economy.

However, the volume of these investments is not yet in accordance with the opportunities offered by Colombia. In 2017, Colombia received only USD\$ 71 million in FDI from Japan and even though this represents a 300% increase from 2016, it is only a small fraction of the USD\$ 123.6 billion total of Japanese investment flows to the world.

Since 2015, an Agreement for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments is in force between our countries, which we trust will incentive Japanese companies to invest in Colombia.

I want to take this opportunity to invite you to get to know and seize the opportunities to invest in different sector of our economy, such as agrifood, forestry, telecommunications, BPO (Business Process Outsourcing), financial services, infrastructure, vehicles, construction materials, agrochemicals, cosmetics, clothing, among others.

Be our partners in promoting orange economy, the creative industries sector, which is a path full of opportunities for all the young people in our country.

The Government of President Iván Duque is radically betting on orange economy and creative industries. We are convinced that creatives, designers, artists and entrepreneurs may have the answer to many development challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean. I am confident that this is a fruitful ground on which Japan and Colombia can build a mutually beneficial alliance. If we rapidly begin working on this field, we will soon see the gains.

Finally, be our partners in strengthening even more the bond between our people. This is without a doubt the most important bond that can be established between two States, stronger and more significant than material ties.

Colombians have had the chance to get closer to Japan in many ways, for instance, through dozens of public libraries donated by this country, the science exchange program for young people "SAKURA" and the scholarships for young Colombians to advance their studies in Japan.

Japanese people too have gotten the chance to know Colombia a little more, through initiatives such as the sports and cultural diplomacy program, which has brought young Colombians to Japan to share with you our music and promote intercultural dialogue through sports. We have also supported Japanese scholars to

learn Spanish as a foreign language in our country.

All that remains for me to do, is to extend to you one last invitation: visit Colombia. Last year only 7.500 Japanese tourists arrived to our country, but I can assure that we are a world class destination that will certainly appeal to all of you and that you are going to love as much as we do.

Recently, international media have included Colombia on the list of most attractive destinations, highlighting the great variety of its touristic offer, which includes culture and gastronomy in main cities, natural parks with a biodiversity that is unique in the world, beaches, coffee farms, deserts and much more. We are waiting for you.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to conclude by evoking, with deep satisfaction, how much we have achieved together over this 110 years of our bilateral relation and tell you that I look to the future with hope and expectation of what we can jointly accomplish in the centuries to come.

I want to salute, in this country of the rising sun, a nascent stage of our relation, one in which Colombia and Japan can consolidate their relation to such a point that it could inspire other Nations and contribute, as a result of our convergence and common efforts, to having a safer and more stable world, with more freedom and more opportunities, with more discoveries and innovations, with more intercultural dialogue for future generations.

Thank you very much.