

**Welcome Message from the Ambassador of Costa Rica in Japan  
during the first edition of the program (2016)**

*Distinguished Mr. Yasushi Takase, Director General of the Latin America and the Caribbean Affairs Bureau*

*Distinguished Colleagues Ambassadors, representatives and experts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Ministries,*

*Ladies and Gentleman*

I am the Ambassador of Costa Rica and I was kindly invited to, in the framework of JUNTOS, give you some words tonight.

For those who this is the first visit to Japan, let me tell you that I always use to say that, in my case, my first feeling when I first came to this country (almost ten years ago) was that I had taken the Time Machine and I traveled to the future, like in the Julio Verne story.

In Japan you can find many good things: order, cleanness, respect, discipline and many more. So I'm sure that we have many things to learn of this marvellous country. But also, for those who are here now and have never visited Latin America and the Caribbean let me also describe what we have over there:

Many of our countries have been ranked as the happiest countries in the world. That means that there's something special in that part of the world. We have a very diverse population: Indians, mestizos, blacks, zambos, also europeans, african and asians every one with their own culture and customs. We speak english, spanish, portuguese and french, plus our native languages of course. We have also diversity in music, since reggae to salsa, bachata to merengue, bolero to rock and of course classic music.

I can go on and on, talking about religion, art, literature, cuisine and many other things here and there. And of course we have many things to learn about each other. But tonight about all together, I mean JUNTOS

As Prime Minister Abe said in Sao Paulo, Brasil: "When Japan, Latin America and the Caribbean join forces to make the world a better place to live, our position will be strengthened by the values and visions we share"

There is a long history between Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean and that build a strong friendship between us. As we know there are three principals in JUNTOS: Progress, leadership and inspire.

I know that we have many different things in our societies but we are more united by our shared values, so: JUNTOS let's be the world leaders, inspiring quality of life, a life according with human rights, environment, peace, liberty and every other things that allows us to progress JUNTOS

**Thank you very much**

Laura Esquivel  
**Former Ambassador of Costa Rica in Japan**