

## Spain devoted to global fight against COVID-19

By Jorge Toledo  
Ambassador of Spain

Spain's National Day, Oct. 12, takes place this year at a very special moment for Spain and Japan. After almost two years in which the world has suffered the human tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic, harsh restrictions on international mobility and a considerable decline in P2P, economic, political and cultural exchanges, we both begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. A clear and sustained decrease in the number of infections is underway, allowing us all to look at 2022 with prudent optimism.



Jorge Toledo

COVID-19 has been a test for the international community and a tragedy for those who have fallen victim to its lethal effects. These personal losses and the pain they have caused among families and friends will always be present in our hearts.

Vaccination has been revealed as the primary factor in curbing the pandemic. Spain is one of the countries with the highest percentage of fully vaccinated people at almost 80% of the population. Thanks to this, the number of infections has decreased dramatically, and the incidence rate is already at low levels.

But Spain is aware that the fight against the pandemic is a global challenge. The next goal is to get the ma-

jority of the world's population vaccinated in the shortest possible time. Spain is strongly collaborating in these efforts both bilaterally and through the different regional and international initiatives.

The pandemic has severely limited international mobility. International tourism, business travel and international cultural and personal relations have declined in an unprecedented manner. In these difficult circumstances, Spain, and the international community as a whole, congratulate and are very grateful to Japan and the Japanese people for generously having been able to successfully hold the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Now that the pandemic situation is improving, particularly in the European Union and Japan, we all hope that sooner rather than later we will be able to start reverting barriers, opening borders, reconnecting and resuming international mobility between Japan and Europe to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Although economic relations have also been impacted negatively by the pandemic, our trade continues to be strong and we expect good growth for 2022, especially in the food sector, machinery, pharmaceuticals, cars, vehicle components, clothing and fashion articles, among others. The economic outlook for Spain appears bright again. The OECD has increased its growth forecast for

Spain to 6.8% in 2022, thanks to the positive effects of vaccinations and post-pandemic EU funds.

Tourism has been one of the great casualties of the pandemic, but we are working hard to promote Spain in Japan as an ideal, attractive and safe tourist destination in 2022. Spain has reinforced its commitment to the international recovery of sustainable tourism, and as well reinforced the World Tourism Organization with a new headquarters in the center of Madrid. We are confident that 2022 will be the year when Japanese tourists return to Spain and enjoy our rich and varied tourist offerings, which have made Spain one of the three most-visited countries in the world.

Regarding culture, and despite the restrictions that have limited the presence of Spanish artists in Japan during 2021, there have been important events in the fields of music and dance, as well as the inauguration of various exhibitions dedicated to Miró and Barceló, or the "Sports at the Comics," held during the Olympic and Paralympic Games at the Spanish Embassy in Tokyo. Furthermore, there was a record number of candidates this year for the Spanish Language exam, which was organized by Instituto Cervantes in eight cities, while Spanish is taught at 228 Japanese universities. The Instituto Cervantes has maintained both virtual and hybrid classes during the pandemic, with an intense agen-

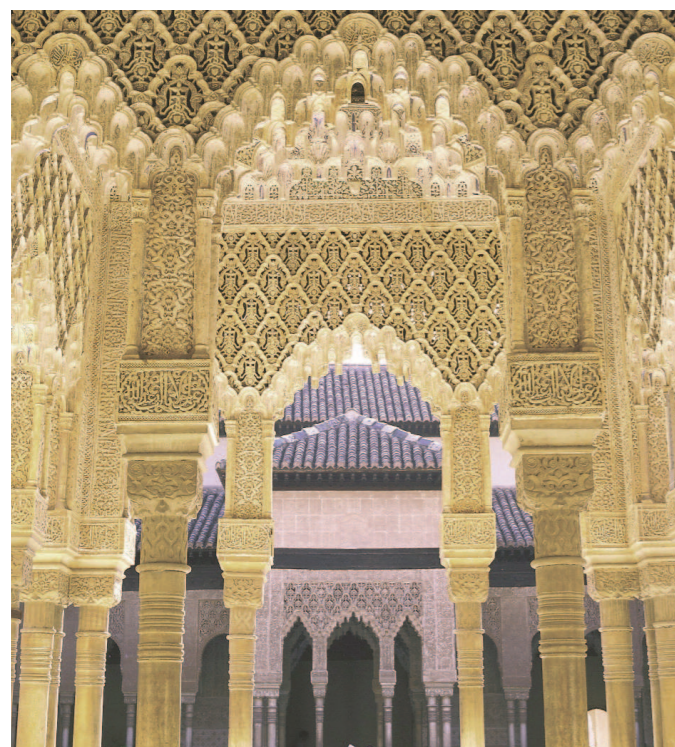


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Spain's renewable energy is the key to achieve the decarbonization goals.

da of high-quality, virtual cultural activities.

2021 comes to an end with some reasons for optimism. We sincerely hope that 2022 will be a better year for all, and that Spain and Japan will continue to strengthen their strategic partnership at all levels with renewed dynamism.



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The Court of the Lions is the main courtyard of the Palace of the Lions in the heart of at the Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain.

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on the National Day of  
the Kingdom of Spain!

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