

# *Ecuador Keen to Seal Trade Pact with Japan Quickly*

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Tokyo, November 7 (RHC-EFE) -- Ecuador's Foreign Trade Minister Francisco Rivadeneira hopes to begin negotiations on a free trade agreement with Japan as soon as possible, he said in an interview on Thursday.

Rivadeneira is on his first official visit to Japan and has held meetings with counterparts in the Japanese government and heads of financial and academic institutions and the private sector.

"The main objective of this visit is to show, at the highest levels, the will to strengthen trade relations," the minister said, adding that the year 2018 would mark 100 years of bilateral ties between the two countries.

He said that obstacles to boosting trade exist in the form of duties and the lack of knowledge about Japanese business culture.

In this regard, he stressed that Ecuador sought to formalize trade talks that have taken place with the Japanese authorities over the last two years and start negotiating a future agreement as soon as possible.

That agreement is expected to benefit Ecuador's agriculture and agribusiness sector, especially regarding the export of products such as mangos, bananas, broccoli, cocoa, flowers and wood, as well as their

derivative products.

Another objective of the visit, according to the minister, is to attract more investment to Ecuador in sectors like petroleum, petrochemicals, shipbuilding, iron and steel, metallurgy, energy and telecommunications.

He added that several Japanese firms are already working on important projects in Ecuador such as the renovation of the Esmeraldas Refinery and in renewable energy.

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