

My name is Taoka and I am the Paraguayan Ambassador to Japan.

I am here today to present my speech regarding migration.

It is impossible for me to discuss this topic in general terms, as it would require analyses from various aspects.

As such, starting with briefly introducing my background, I would like to discuss the topic of migration based on my personal experience.

I believe that, being an “immigrant” myself, by telling you about my life story, you as listeners will be inspired to talk about various aspects of migration issues.

I am a Paraguayan with a Japanese face and a Japanese name.

My family and I emigrated to the new world of Paraguay as migrant farmers when I was fourteen years old in 1958.

Since then, for the past forty-eight years, I have lived in the settlements for Japanese immigrants as a farmer and underwent many experiences.

When my father passed away in 1969, I came to the position of supporting my family as head of the household, thereby fulfilling my father’s will.

Ever since, obtaining a stable life in the new land was the main goal for me as I worked hard on my farms. As a result, I believe that I have been able to attain the foundation as a farmer.

And now, I, the farmer, reside in Tokyo as the ambassador of the country I migrated to, Paraguay. I cannot help but to wonder how amazing life can be.

As I look back, our settlement began with the challenge of cutting down and cultivating the forest wilderness.

Today, I own 1,500 hectares of arable land and have successfully managed raising soy.

My son is now married and I am letting him be involved in the management of the farms.

Due to the development of the settlements of Japanese immigrants, I have become the chair of both the “Farmer’s Cooperative”, the organization for the settlement’s economic activities, and the “Japanese Association (Nihonjin-kai)”, the administrative organization, which allowed me to engage in the strengthening of these organizations.

The Japanese Association continued its growth and became a part of the local administration, eventually resulting in becoming a city government, where I served as the first mayor.

As the Japanese settlements became incorporated into Paraguay’s government institutions, establishing social infrastructure for the local community became an urgent issue. In so doing, I realized that it is imperative for someone to represent the community in politics.

This is why I decided to take on that role.

The fact that my farming business has been stably successful and my children have grown up to be able to carry on my business led me to make up my mind.

At first, I went through the “naturalization” process in order to obtain Paraguayan nationality.

I am afraid that in this globalized world in which everything moves too fast, including human mobility, only goods and money are passing us by while our minds have not yet adjusted to the change occurring in the world.

According to a study by the IMF, the amount of remittances by migrant workers sent to their mother-countries in Latin America in 2003 reached US \$38 billion, an amount which surmounts the total amount of the official development assistance (ODA).

As we live in the world in which “humans” and “money” move globally, I believe that discussing the topic of “migration” would be extremely worthwhile.
I now conclude my speech. Thank you for your attention.