

Ghana independence day

Future to be built on democratic foundations

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE REPUBLIC
OF GHANA IN JAPAN

Today marks the 52nd anniversary of Ghana's independence.

On March 6, 1957, Africa saw the birth of its first independent black sovereign state, thus ushering in a new era of hope and promise to the peoples of the entire continent.

On this auspicious occasion, and also in commemoration of the assumption of office of the new government in Ghana, led by His Excellency President John Evans Atta Mills, it is my profound privilege and great pleasure to convey my deepest respect and warmest greetings, on behalf of the government and people of Ghana, to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the members of the Imperial family, as well as to Prime Minister Taro Aso,



and the government and people of Japan. It is also a great pleasure for me to extend my sincere thanks to the management and personnel of The Japan Times for allowing me to address its faithful readership through this medium.

The commemoration of this historic day comes shortly after the successful general election in December last year, which attested to the continuing consolidation of democracy in Ghana. The beginning of the new democratic process with the return to constitutional government in 1992 was not without its difficulties and uncertainties. Yet the devotion and commitment of the people to the process ensured its general acceptance as a viable means through which to promote national integration and promote the development of our country.

The process of consolidating our democratic gains has come a long way. In fact democratic institutions have matured and been groomed to ensure that they meet national aspirations. Apart from hold-



President of the Republic of Ghana John Evans Atta Mills

ing elected governments accountable they provide the bedrock that imbues hope in our people for the future.

The December 2008 elections were the fourth since 1992. Four political parties fielded candidates for the presidential office as well as 230 seats in the legislature. The voter turnout was nearly 70 percent out of a registered voter population of 12,472,758 million. The elections were witnessed by international ob-

servers: the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union. The presidential election had to go into a runoff when the first round produced no clear winner to satisfy the constitutional requirements that a winner must secure more than 50 percent of the total number of votes cast. And at the end, these respected organizations and institutions accepted the free and fair nature of the election, which witnessed the smooth change of government from the control of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) to the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

The government's respect for the rule of law, fundamental human rights, freedom of the press and association have all contributed to hold and sustain the democratic dispensation. And supported by an independent judiciary and a vibrant legislature, Ghana has become a beacon of good governance and political stability in Africa. The resulting peaceful political environment has created the enabling conditions through which to harness the full potential of our people for national development and progress.

In the last few years Ghana has made progress in its economic development with the continued support of the international community. Ghana still relies on the support of such developed partners as Japan for assistance. I wish to acknowledge the immense assistance that Japan continues to offer Ghana. In the specific areas of infrastructure development, education, health and human resource development, Japanese assistance has greatly contributed to enhance our capacity to achieve benchmarks set out by the Millennium Challenge Goals (MCGs). In pursuit of the Japanese commitment to assist

with poverty alleviation in Africa, Ghana has continued to fully take advantage of the "one village, one product" concept as an important economic plank with the potential to harness the marketing of local products abroad. Equally important is the desire of Japanese businesses to make investment inroads into Africa. The creation of awareness of the business potential in Africa through seminars, workshops, and exhibitions and fairs under Japanese sponsorship has contributed to forge closer collaboration between important business houses and partners in Ghana.

Various measures instituted in the last five years have enhanced the role of the private sector. Ghana has opened its doors to foreign investors and entrepreneurs by taking a number of steps that have greatly improved incentives and created a more business-friendly atmosphere, which allows good returns on investments. No doubt Ghana is listed among the most attractive investment destinations in the emerging markets.

Our geographical location in West Africa, almost centrally placed with infrastructure reaching out to neighboring countries, and good communication networks have made us as an attractive regional hub. The existence of a large regional market, which can be accessed through Ghana, further attests to the advantages in Ghana for foreign investments.

The desire to further increase our cooperation is further attested to by the visit to Ghana last year of a Japanese trade and investment mission. Coming soon after the successful hosting by Japan of TICAD IV, the mission familiarized itself with the opportunities and potential for trade and investment, and scientific and technological cooperation between Ghana and Japan. In this regard, we look forward with high expectations to the proposed Japanese collaboration between scientific institutions of the two countries.



Up, up and away: Once you get airborne over the Kwahu Plateau in Atibie, Ghana, you may never want to come down. Some of the longest flights can last over five hours. According to one regular hang glider pilot, gliding in the equatorial atmosphere is a unique experience. Ghana offers exceptionally good flying conditions and is good for cross-country flights.



Bird's-eye view: Kakum National Park is an undisturbed rain forest, extending over an area of 357 sq. km, with some of the trees climbing as high as 65 meters. The park's Canopy Walkway is the perfect spot from where to enjoy over 550 butterfly species, over 200 bird species, over 40 mammal species and about seven primates.



Painful history: Cape Coast Castle remains as one of the legacies of the slave trade. Established by the Dutch in 1492, slaves were kept and shackled in the castle's dungeons to await their journey of "no return" to a life of hard labor in the New World.

Ghana continues to maintain very warm and cordial relations with Japan based on a common desire to promote global peace and strengthen international cooperation. The two countries have supported peace-building efforts especially in Africa and other trouble spots elsewhere. We acknowledge Japan's peacekeeping roles in these flash points and express our sincerest appreciation for the gov-

ernment's contribution to the promotion of peace.

The role of Japan in addressing very important global issues of concern to humanity is well acknowledged and also appreciated. Through its vision and leadership, Japan has built a consensus on greenhouse gas emissions targets in a post-Kyoto Protocol framework. Ghana promises to work assiduously with the help of Japan through its commitment to provide financial as well as technology to develop a sustainable energy for economic development by using renewable clean energy sources.

No less important is the new role that has been redefined in the mandate of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). JICA continues to play such an invaluable role in the delivery of technical cooperation. Ghana stands com-

mitted to fully cooperate in areas of technical cooperation under which 100 Japanese volunteers and technical workers are working with rural communities in Ghana in areas such as education, health and agriculture. We commend the efforts of these Japanese volunteers.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment to strengthen further the excellent relations between Ghana and Japan. We look forward to working to increase cooperation in the interests of our two countries and peoples. I thank the Japanese government for its assistance to Ghana and the Japanese people for their friendship, fully convinced that the warm and cordial relations that exist between our two countries will continue to grow and blossom.

Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Ghana on the 52nd Anniversary of Their Independence Day

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