

Ethiopia national day/world

A day to celebrate partnership,
Ethiopia's historic transformationAbdirashid Dulane
AMBASSADOR OF ETHIOPIA TO JAPAN

It is a great pleasure and honor on the 18th anniversary of our National Day to convey on behalf of the government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia my heartfelt, respectful best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial family, and the friendly government and people of Japan.



May 28 marks a historic milestone in the social, political and economic transformation of Ethiopia. It ushered in a new era of peace, democratic dispensation and development for the first time in our history. Long-standing conflicts that ravaged our country for decades have been resolved, and durable peace and stability have been ensured.

In the last 18 years, as enshrined in the constitution, the fundamental rights of our people have been fully recognized and institutions of democratic governance have been put in place, which allowed our people to fully exercise their democratic rights and actively participate in the political process

of the country. Multiparty politics have been introduced, and after three successful national, regional and local legislative elections, which saw the participation of a wide range of political parties, the country is well prepared to hold its fourth legislative elections next year. This is a clear indication that the democratic process in Ethiopia, although in its infancy, is on a firm course and it is increasingly gaining momentum.

May 28 also opened a new chapter in the socioeconomic development of our country. To extricate our people from the malaise of poverty and underdevelopment, our government has charted the right development path to bring about rapid economic growth that benefits all sections of society. The Millennium Development Goals have been incorporated in our development policies and strategies. With the scaling up of efforts to meet these goals in full swing, it is gratifying to note that the double-digit economic growth registered for the last five consecutive years has brought about significant advances toward achieving the MDGs. Sustaining this growth pace in the years ahead would undoubtedly lead us to join the ranks of middle-income countries in the next two decades.

Therefore, as we commemorate May 28, we draw pride and

satisfaction from the monumental achievements that have been made in terms of broadening the frontiers of democratic governance and ensuring sustained development over the last 18 years since the EPRDF-led government came to power.

As we celebrate this 18th anniversary, Ethiopia and Japan have enjoyed a strong relationship, and this relationship has been further cemented with high-level exchange visits between the leaderships of the two sisterly countries. Japan has been one of the leading development partners of Ethiopia, and I would like to seize this opportunity to express the deepest appreciation of the people and government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the generous assistance provided by Japan to our country's development endeavors. It would be remiss of me to fail to mention the Hidase, or Renaissance, Bridge, constructed over the Nile gorge as a part of the Addis Ababa-Gohatsion-Degen road project, with grant assistance generously provided by the Japanese government, which was inaugurated by H.E. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on Sept. 10, 2008. At the inauguration ceremony, Prime Minister Meles called the Hidase Bridge a "living monument and symbol of Ethio-Japanese friendship."

In the realm of multilateral cooperation, Ethiopia and Japan are also working closely within the framework of TICAD. I would like to commend the unwavering commitment of the Japanese government to support African development. This was amply demonstrated by the Yokohama Declaration, Action Plan and Follow-up mechanism adopted at TICAD IV in Yokohama last May. It gives us great satisfaction to note the progress that has so far been made with regard to the implementation of the Action Plan, as affirmed by the Com-

muniqué of the first Ministerial Follow-up Conference in Gaborone, Botswana, in late March 2009, and the high-level participation of former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone and Parliamentary Vice Minister Nobuhide Minorikawa.

In relation to the current financial crisis and its impact on Africa, following the communique adopted at the Gaborone conference, Prime Minister Tarō Aso conveyed the viewpoint of the conference to the Group of 20 summit, once again reiterating Japan's firm commitment to Africa and urged the international community to follow suit. It is to be recalled that, beginning from the consultative meeting in London, Prime Minister Meles has played an exceptional role in representing Africa's position at the G-20 summit in his capacity as the chairperson of NEPAD by lobbying for additional resources for the continent to help weather the impact of the global financial crisis. Ethiopia will continue to work closely with Japan with a view to realizing the objectives of TICAD.

On the occasion of the celebration of our National Day, we cherish the excellent bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Japan, and look forward to the further enhancement and consolidation of the multifaceted ties existing between the two sisterly countries in the years ahead.

In terms of people-to-people ties, the Ethiopian Cultural Dance Troupe Tour Japan 2008 took place to celebrate the culmination of Ethiopia's Millennium festivities and as a memorial to the Africa-Japan Exchange Year. The cultural troupe, which consisted of 11 members, staged shows in three places in Tokyo (Takana, JICA Hiroo Plaza and Asakusabashi), Kawasaki, Yokohama, Kyoto and Shinshiro City (Aichi). Their shows, rep-



Building the future: (Above) The city of Addis Ababa (meaning "new flower") is the center of African diplomacy, hosting the headquarters of the African Union and the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa, and a burgeoning metropolis. (Below) The Hidase (Renaissance) Nile Bridge, financed by a Japanese government grant, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on Sept. 10, 2008, who called it "a living monument and symbol of Ethio-Japanese friendship." ETHIOPIAN EMBASSY



resenting the richness and diversity of the dances of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia, were captivating and hugely entertaining. Their eye-catching costumes were colorful and their dance rhythms unique.

The Ethiopian Cultural Dance Troupe Tour Japan 2008 was successful, and it has greatly contributed to the furtherance of the people-to-people and overall relationship of the two countries on the cultural front. This was highlighted by the presence of Vice Minister Minorikawa, who was the guest of honor during their final show on Ethiopian Night at JICA Hiroo Plaza.

The contributions of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, The Japan Foundation, Ethiopian National Theatre, Asahi Cultural Foundation, Ethiopian Airlines and the Ethiopian Millennium 2000 Japan, in-

cluding the Ethiopian Association of Japan, Mocha Dance Group, former JOCV members and a large number of volunteers, were instrumental in the success of the Ethiopian Cultural Dance Troupe Tour Japan 2008. We thank them all.

On this festive occasion, I would like to commend the exemplary and selfless role played by the Japan-Ethiopia Parliamentary Committee, the Ethiopian Association of Japan, Mocha Ethiopia Dance Group, my compatriots, and other friends of Ethiopia in the further advancement of the relationship between the two sisterly countries and their peoples.

Finally, I would like to thank The Japan Times and the sponsors of this special page — Toyota Tsusho Corp., Eagle Shipping Japan Ltd., Brooks Co. and the Queen Sheba Restaurant — for giving me this opportunity to address the esteemed readers of this great newspaper.

A better future with
visionary leadershipAsahiko Mihara
CHAIRMAN, ETHIOPIA COMMITTEE,
JAPAN-AU PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP
LEAGUE

On behalf of the Ethiopia Committee of the Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship League, I would like to extend my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to the government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on the occasion of the 18th anniversary of their National Day.

I made my third visit to Ethiopia last summer. On my two previous visits, 35 and 20 years ago, I saw an Ethiopia that was hard up economically and politically, and short of vitality for the future, much to my regret.

But my latest visit was different because it provided a good opportunity to see Ethiopia steadily moving ahead toward a better future. Addis Ababa, the capital, for example, is full of automobiles and has high-rise buildings, and the people are neatly dressed.

In addition to the capital, I visited Gondar and Bahar Dar, and some farming areas on the way. Although the World Heri-

tage site in Gondar was under repair, people working there looked enthusiastic about attracting tourists to the site from all over the world. People in Bahar Dar also appeared eager to make cruises on Lake Tana more attractive for tourism.

I found that the lives of farming communities are gradually improving. I saw children silently driving goats and cattle in the rain. I saw that an increasing number of farming households in the countryside have begun using electricity. Some farmers have started to grow flowers such as roses and orchids for export to increase their incomes.

We had the honor of meeting Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and listened to him eagerly discussing Ethiopia's future. The prime minister expressed his willingness to build the country based upon agriculture and learn from Japan's success. I was impressed by his determination to dedicate himself to the development of Ethiopia. Dedication to one's country is a prerequisite of any national leader. I believe that Prime Minister Meles has been putting it into practice. I was not alone in thinking that Japan has to support his aspirations in every respect.

Sadao Umeda
PRESIDENT, ETHIOPIAN ASSOCIATION
OF JAPAN

On behalf of the Ethiopian Association of Japan, I would like to extend our sincere compliments and congratulations to the people and government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on the memorable occasion of the 18th anniversary of Ethiopian National Day.

The past two years have been exciting and unforgettable. To celebrate the Millennium New Year in Ethiopia, starting Sept. 12, 2007, the association joined a commemoration in organizing and enjoying the "Ethiopian Millennium in Japan." Ceremonial activities planned by the embassy, which was headed by H.E. Ambassador Abdirashid Dulane, association members and volunteers from both countries developed



closer ties of cooperation in promoting Ethiopian culture in Japan, and even became a symbolic showcase of mutual friendship.

2008 was an epoch-making year distinguished by the continuing Ethiopian Millennium Year and the Japan-Africa Exchange Year designated in connection with the opening of TICAD IV in Yokohama in May.

TICAD IV was attended by H.E. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, as well as high-ranking representatives from many African countries, international organizations and private sectors, to discuss measures to shore up "A Vibrant Africa" and Japan as host pledged at the conference various assistance programs, including doubling ODA to Africa, assistance for doubling private investment to the region, and assistance for the development of water resources and agriculture, etc.

Prime Minister Meles energetically returned to Japan again in July to attend the

Economic, cultural exchanges make giant strides

Group of Eight Toyako summit and played a big role representing Africa at the meeting. Former Ambassador Kenjiro Izumi, vice president of the association, with our board members, welcomed H.E. Tadesse Haile, state minister of trade and industry, who visited Japan at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and they exchanged views on how to promote business opportunities besides renewing their friendship.

Along with such development efforts on a government level, our activities have shown another step of progress in cultural and philanthropic aspects. With financial support from The Japan Foundation and the Asahi Shimbun Cultural Foundation, the joint committee of the Ethiopian Embassy, Millennium Committee and association invited the Ethiopian National Cultural Dance Troupe to Japan in early November. To mark the closing of the Ethiopian Millennium Year, this major event became a cultural highlight of the year. Drawing great attention to Ethiopia's art heritage from Japanese audiences, the tour ended successfully thanks to the generous and enthusiastic cooperation of local sponsors in Tokyo, Kawasaki, Yokohama, Shinshiro, Aichi, and Kyoto, as well as committee members and volunteers.

Professor Riichi Miyake, a director of our association, served as chairman of the Executive Committee for the International Symposium on Cultural Heritage in Ethiopia

2008, and succeeded in donating a Japanese "kominka," a wooden house, in Ohda City, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Japan, to Gondar City, another UNESCO World Heritage site in Ethiopia. His tireless efforts to seek funds, and solicit contributions from the public and private sectors culminated in the successful transfer and erection of the eco-friendly house.

I would like to commend Yukihiko Naito and Takeshi Kondo, directors of our association, for their remarkable work. Last year, Naito had a total of 1,200 sets of threesome desks, combined with chairs, delivered to needy schoolchildren in rural Ethiopia as part of his lifetime project (he has made 10 visits to the country since 1972). Kondo was the intermediary for the donation of 500 sets of T-shirts and bags from Nikkan Sports News to a Cheshire center for disabled children in the suburbs of Addis Ababa. Ambassador Kinichi Komano personally attended the donation ceremony. I regret, however, that space limitations do not allow me to name the many other directors, members and volunteers who have greatly helped the association's fruitful programs.

In closing, I sincerely wish Ethiopia and its people every success, progress and prosperity. This association will continue its endeavors to promote mutual friendship and good will in the economic and cultural fields.

Congratulations

to the People of

the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
on the 18th Anniversary of Their National DayG VALUE
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