

# DR Congo independence day

## Time for reconstruction in the DRC

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REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Democratic Republic of Congo celebrates today the 49th year of its accession to national and international sovereignty.



I seize this beautiful opportunity to send the best wishes and warm greetings

from His Excellency Joseph Kabila Kabange, president of the republic, to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the Imperial family.

The greetings also go to the Japanese government and people, to all the friends of the DRC and to all my fellow citizens living in Japan: Happy Independence Day.

As I mentioned in our message last year, the DRC is at a crossroads. We hope that 2009 will be the starting point

for the reconstruction of our country, which was completely destroyed by repeated armed conflicts.

This hope is based on two major facts that occurred at the beginning of this year. First, the restoration of a diplomatic relationship and good-neighborly relations with Rwanda. And second, the signing of a peace agreement between the government and former Gen. Laurent Nkunda for the National Congress for the Defense of the People (NCDP), and all the other rebel factions. These two events are mutually connected.

For a long time, Rwanda and the DRC blamed each other for giving support to negative forces in order to destabilize the neighboring country — even if the war only took place on DRC territory, resulting in millions of dead and displaced people, and also, it must be said, in the systematic, large-scale pillage of the mining resources that can be found in abundance in the conflict area.

This instability, in a geographic area that represents



President Joseph Kabila Kabange of the Democratic Republic of Congo

less than one-third of the whole territory, was used as an excuse by some potential investors for not investing in the DRC. This is especially true of Japanese companies.

Now that this risk has been removed, we repeat the appeal launched by President Kabila to Japanese business people during his visit to Tokyo in 2005, to turn their eyes toward the DRC. A country that some people consider as a

“geological scandal” because of the richness of its mineral resources.

The reconstruction of the country has been launched by the president and focuses on five fields that we call “the five projects”: infrastructure, health, education, water — electricity and employment — and housing.

These are huge tasks that the DRC can't carry out by itself, especially during the global financial crisis, which has affected our economy too. Besides, our economy was already weakened by the reimbursement of an external debt that has reached more than \$12 billion.

The country thus loses every month about \$50 million that might have been used for the well-being of our wounded people. This debt is in fact abhorrent and the loan conditions related to it were more than obscure. We want to believe that the negotiations with the IMF will lead to a happy ending for the DRC. What must be noted here is that sur-

prisingly, unlike other post-conflict countries, the DRC was never given preferential conditions to access the extended facilities of the Bretton Woods Institutions. Why?

In this work of reconstructing our country, the government of the DRC is firmly waiting for the contributions of our traditional partners. But also from everyone will-

ing to join us in bringing this giant of Africa back to life.

In a similar vein, we would like to acknowledge and salute once more the support that the Japanese government and the Japanese people have given to the DRC during the last years. We especially salute the decision announced in March to allot \$19 million to social and humanitarian projects. Our peo-

ple need it.

Within the framework of the Action Plan adopted during TICAD IV in Yokohama, the DRC is also waiting for direct investments from Japanese companies, which could generate jobs, so that the Congolese people can benefit from the dividends of all the efforts and sacrifices made in the field of politics during these dark years.

### Congratulations

to the People of the Democratic Republic of Congo  
on the 49th Anniversary of Their Independence

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Building for the future: President Joseph Kabila launches the rehabilitation work on the Bukavu-Kavumu highway in South Kivu on May 26, 2008. EMBASSY OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO