

# Djibouti president's visit

## President's visit reinforces the strategic partnership between Japan and Djibouti

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AMBASSADOR OF DJIBOUTI TO JAPAN

On the auspicious occasion of the visit to Japan of H.E. Ismail Omar Guelleh, president of the Republic of Djibouti, from Dec. 19 to 22, it gives me great pleasure to address the esteemed readers of The Japan Times.

At the outset, I would like to convey the warm greetings of President Guelleh, as well as his best wishes for the health and happiness, to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the rest of the Imperial family, and peace and prosperity to the friendly people and government of Japan.

The president is leading a large delegation that includes Minister of Foreign and International Cooperation H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf and other high-ranking officials. This visit is a clear illustration of the excellent relations that have existed between our two countries for more than 33 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties.

These relations have been greatly strengthened in the last years as witnessed by the establishment of Japanese representation in Djibouti and the high-level exchange of visits in 2009 and 2010. This visit appears to be the culmination of other ministerial-level visits that have been undertaken by both sides to consolidate and diversify their relations.

During his visit, President Guelleh had a very open and fruitful meeting with Prime Minister Naoto Kan, during which important issues of interest to both sides were discussed.

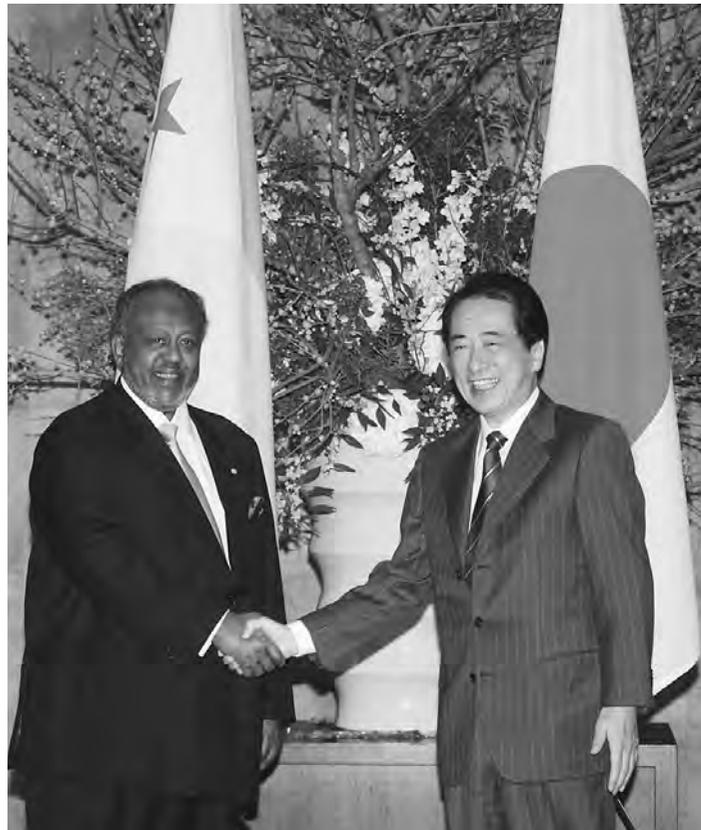
The two heads of government agreed to further consolidate their strategic partnership in all fields possible and in particular in the economic field. They both underlined their shared position on the

maintenance of peace and security in the world in general, and in our region in particular, and for that reason have been cooperating in the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia.

The president of the Republic of Djibouti has welcomed the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and coast guard engagement since 2009 in protecting the commercial vessels passing through these waters, which are considered one of the most paramount maritime lanes in the world in terms of traffic. The president was able to meet several ministers, including Minister of Defense Toshimi Kitazawa and JICA President Sadako Ogata, as well as other high officials. Furthermore, the president will pay a courtesy visit on the Emperor during his visit and meet with the Japan-Djibouti Parliamentary Friendship Association.

In order to improve trade exchanges between Djibouti and Japan, a business breakfast meeting is to be co-organized by the Djibouti Chamber of Commerce and Industry and our embassy, with the participation of Japanese business organizations such as Keizai Doyukai and Keidanren, as well as many Japanese companies, some of which have been active in Djibouti or have business relations with the Djibouti business community.

It is useful to mention that an important business delegation led by the president of the chamber of commerce of Djibouti and former president of COMESA Business Council, Said Omar Moussa, and which comprises heads of Djibouti companies active in the sectors of transport, logistics, export and import of consumer goods, and property development will be present at this breakfast meeting. It will be a good opportunity to familiarize the Japanese business



Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh meets Prime Minister Naoto Kan at the Prime Minister's Official Residence in Tokyo on Dec. 20

community with the many assets and potential of our economy based on the transport corridor, which constitutes the backbone of our development.

Despite poor international economic conditions, the pace of economic growth has been positive in 2010, exceeding 5 percent, and is expected to be on the ascending trend for the coming year. The Djibouti free zones continue to receive more foreign firms wishing to establish a presence and use the Djibouti location as a center of distribution for products as well as a logistic platform. There were 127 such companies in 2009 and the number is expected to rise.

The low investment flows registered during the world economic slowdown were compensated by other opportunities that will make possi-

ble the launch of infrastructure projects. A shipyard project, with an estimated value of \$250 million, combined with a new port in the city of Tadjourah and express highways to the northern part of Ethiopia are part of these projects, and will certainly enhance the gateway position of the Republic of Djibouti.

During this business meeting and during other meetings with Japanese business organizations, President Guelleh will warmly invite Japanese companies to invest in Djibouti, the gateway to Africa, by emulating other foreign investors who are beginning to recognize the strategic position of Djibouti.

The success of the booming transport platform is giving impetus to the local economy that is expanding through the

establishment of many banks, hotels and small-scale industries, which are labor-intensive sectors, with a trickle-down effect on society overall. This is in accordance with the National Initiative for social development launched in 2007 under the leadership of the president and is focused mainly on four strategies, one of which is the creation of favorable conditions for sustainable economic development.

In that perspective, the government is seeking to achieve these conditions especially in the sectors of energy and vocational training. The challenges in the energy sector can be overcome if renewable energies such as geothermal, solar and wind energy, abundantly available in our country, can be harnessed.

Promising projects are being studied in this field and could be concretized under a public-private partnership mechanism in the coming years, and we welcome the support of interested partners in Japan and in other countries.

Through this visit, we are also reinforcing our ties with the largest Japanese medical group, Tokushukai, led by the philanthropic Dr. Torao Tokuda, as an example of the multifaceted cooperation we would like to imprint on the bilateral relations between our two countries.

This partnership built on confidence and strenuous efforts led to the establishment of the second dialysis center in the country last April thanks to Tokushukai's donation of dialysis machines.

The signing of an MOU during this visit has paved the way for an ambitious undertaking of a hospital using the management and the advanced medical technology of Japan for the benefit of local patients, most of whom would not have had the chance to get such treatment without traveling overseas. In conclusion, I would add that the visit has enhanced the bilateral relationship between Djibouti and Japan, and could contribute to the mutual benefit of the Japanese and Djibouti people.



Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh (third from left) meets members of the Japan-Djibouti Parliamentary Friendship Association in Tokyo on Dec. 20

### List of member companies of presidential delegation



GSK  
Massida Logistics & Transport  
CHAB Express  
Savon & Ries Group  
Mega Tamamoul Group  
Ets. J.M. Sharafaily  
General Trading  
Senex SARL  
Capital Rent a Car  
Marill Group  
AL-GAMIL Group  
Halt Group  
Taco SARL  
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Salt Investment

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