

Djibouti national day

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AMBASSADOR OF DJIBOUTI

Nation consolidates position as Africa's gateway

I'm delighted to have been given this opportunity by The Japan Times to address its esteemed readers on the 34th anniversary of the Republic of Djibouti's Independence Day. It is my distinct pleasure to express on behalf of H.E. Ismail Omar Guelleh, president of the Republic of Djibouti, and the Djibouti people my best wishes for the health and happiness of Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and peace and prosperity to the friendly people and government of Japan.



Three months have elapsed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent deadly tsunami hit the north-eastern part of Japan. It is again with profound sadness on behalf of Djibouti's president, people and government, and on my own and those of the Djibouti Embassy staff, that I reiterate our deepest condolences to the bereaved families who have lost loved ones and to the Japanese people as a whole. We express our strong sympathy to those who have been forced to leave their homes because of this triple disaster.

Thanks to the positive image of Japan, there were touching movements of empathy and solidarity toward this country throughout the world, including

my own country. On March 23, a day of solidarity was held in Djibouti where hundreds of people gathered around a city square, including the government led by the president of the republic, to lay a memorial wreath for the Tohoku earthquake victims. We wish for a swift reconstruction process for the affected regions and cities.

Despite these difficult moments that Japan is experiencing, the relations and cooperation with the rest of the world and in particular with Africa have not in any way diminished. This is also the case with Djibouti as the relations between Japan and Djibouti have been growing strongly for the past two years through a number of high level exchanges of visits culminating in the historic visit of H.E. President Guelleh to Japan in December 2010. He was accompanied by H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssef, minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, and a strong business delegation led by the president of the Djibouti Chamber of Commerce, Said Omar, and comprising a prominent businessman that was appointed minister of finance and economy, H.E. Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh. During this visit, President Guelleh met H.E. Naoto Kan, the prime minister, in a very open and fruitful discussion during which important issues of interest to both sides



Friendly ties: Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh meets Prime Minister Naoto Kan in Tokyo on Dec. 20. EMBASSY OF DJIBOUTI

were conversed. The two heads of government agreed to further consolidate their countries' strategic partnership in all fields possible and in particular in the economic field.

With regard to the presence of Self-Defense Forces in Djibouti since 2009, there will be the inauguration of a Japanese base in Djibouti with the attendance of high-ranking officials from both countries. The base is the first Japanese overseas presence in the world for the SDF and is mainly focused on fighting piracy in the Gulf of Aden and in Indian Ocean waters. It can also perform as a good relay post for peacekeeping operations in the

region if necessary. The opening of such a base is a good illustration of the solid bilateral relations linking Japan to Djibouti.

Even though Djibouti has limited economic and defense resources, it is committed to supporting international efforts for maintaining peace and security in our region first and in the rest of the world as a responsible actor and a peace-loving nation. My country is not only resting on Japan and other friendly countries whose vessels are patrolling the vast expanses of sea but also on its own capacity and those of its neighbors, with whom exist a cooperation agreement called the Djibouti Code of Conduct since 2009.

This agreement has been acceded to by 18 countries with the intention to coordinate their fight against piracy and review the national law in light of the provisions contained in this code. The International Maritime Organization and the Djibouti government have signed in May this year a memorandum of understanding paving the way to the start of construction work on a regional training center this year with the main support of Japan.

Moreover, in parallel with these regional efforts, Djibouti is improving its internal capacity in terms of manpower and equipment with the help of friendly partners including Japan. The Djibouti coast guard

term. More economic development needs to be garnered through the creation of employment and improvement of social services within the scrutiny of good governance.

Djibouti is more and more asserting itself as a commercial, financial and logistic platform in the region. Located along the second busiest maritime road, the ports of Djibouti and Dorale and the related transport sectors have witnessed constant growth. The Djibouti free zone continues to receive more foreign firms wishing to establish a presence there and use the Djibouti location as a center of distribution for the products as well as logistic platform. The extension of the port in the city of Tadjourah and its linkage by road and rail to the northern part of Ethiopia will certainly enhance the gateway position of my country.

As other foreign investors are taking interest in the strategic position of Djibouti, I would like to warmly invite the Japanese companies to invest in Djibouti, the gateway to Africa.

I express my gratitude to the Japanese people for providing to Djiboutian people their support in the fields of education, infrastructures and economic cooperation. The projects implemented are directly serving the people of Djibouti by providing valuable services that are extremely appreciated by the population. The multifaceted cooperation existing between the two countries is apparent in the partnership with Tokushukai Medical Corp. initiated in 2009 and strengthened during the

visit last December of H.E. President Guelleh, who awarded Dr. Torao Tokuda with one of the highest national medals for his work for the underprivileged around the world. On this occasion, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the corporation and the Djibouti Health Fund for the project of a first-grade hospital using the management and the advanced medical technology of Japan for the benefit of the local patients.

In terms of integration in the region, the power interconnection between Djibouti and Ethiopia is already effective as a complementary supply to the local production of electricity. Well aware of climate change, Djibouti is developing its own renewable energy sources available in abundance, such as geothermal and wind sources.

Not only is Djibouti reinforcing its commercial position in the region but it is also consoli-



Official logo of the Djibouti Chamber of Commerce

dating its position as a banking place with a number of regional banks setting their eyes on the many incentives and the liberal market that exists in Djibouti to come and open branches. Since last year, three others have settled in Djibouti, increasing the overall number to 10 banks.

Convinced that these positive trends will persist during this 34th year of our independence and beyond, I wish to congratulate the people of Djibouti, leadership and citizens, for their resilience and hard work toward creating a prosperous nation.



Sympathy: Djiboutian youths including students of the College de Fukuzawa in Djibouti show their support for Japan's quake- and tsunami-affected people at a solidarity day rally on March 23 in Djibouti. EMBASSY OF DJIBOUTI

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