

Algeria national day

Promising prospects for deeper, more diverse relations

Sid Ali Ketrandji
AMBASSADOR OF ALGERIA

On the occasion of Algeria's National Day it is my great pleasure to address Japan Times readers and convey a message of friendship to the people and government of Japan, and greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Empress Michiko and Emperor Akihito.



As we are celebrating the 57th anniversary of the launching of the Algerian struggle for independence, Japan is heading out of the tragedy of the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. While reiterating Algeria's solidarity with the people who lost their beloved ones and property, I would like to express our deep consideration for the sense of dignity and resilience displayed in those difficult circumstances

by the Japanese people. My visit to Miyagi Prefecture and my encounter with victims of the earthquake have taught unforgettable lessons in that respect. In fact, those expressions of unity and discipline did not come as a surprise for us. Our respect and consideration for Japan is rooted in our reading of its history. For example, we perceive, as do many African and Arab peoples, the great Meiji Restoration as an admirable and inspiring way of dealing with the complex challenges Japan was facing in 19th century, one of them being foreign domination threats.

The choice made by the Algerian National Liberation Front to open a representation bureau in Tokyo as early as 1958, during our national struggle for independence, was inspired by those considerations, besides the existence of a solidarity network in many segments of Japanese society.

That initial, though informal, step in the forging of Algeria-Japan friendship paved the way



Seafront: Situated on the Mediterranean Sea, the capital Algiers is sometimes called "Algiers the White" for the bright facades of its buildings, especially when seen from the sea. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

during the very first years of independence to an important presence of Japanese enterprise to accompany our national development efforts, particularly

in the hydrocarbon industry. Industrial projects realized with Japanese knowhow and technologies are numerous and have contributed to the existing will to

work together. True, the period of unrest experienced by Algeria in the 1990s had had, for a while, an adverse effect on the progression of bi-

lateral cooperation. However, a new and promising era is open today for a more advanced partnership. Now that Algeria has recovered its stability after years of confrontations with terrorism, the two countries are looking forward to making their mutual relations ever closer. It was in that spirit that the historic visit to Algeria of the then Minister for Foreign Affairs Seiji Maehara took place in December 2010.

Beside the historically rooted friendship, what makes the prospect for deeper and more diversified bilateral relations promising is not only the rich material and financial resources of Algeria, which is enjoyed along with its huge potential, but also the fact that Algeria is now moving ahead in a context of sound stability.

Algeria is harvesting the fruits of an orderly conducted internal dynamics of transformation launched two decades ago, long before the "Arab Spring." The current efforts that are aimed at making political and governance systems ever closer to the standards of modern democracy are supported by the continuous improvement of living conditions in the country, as evidenced, for instance, by the ranking of Algeria in 2010 high on the list of coun-

tries with good human development, established by the United Nations Development Program. Needless to say, the "human development" concept incorporates parameters as diverse as the level of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (\$4,366 as of 2010), school enrollment, electrification rates, access to clean water and energy, density of communication means, status of women, governance and exercise of democratic liberties, among others.

Algeria's rapid progress is, indeed, the result of several years of profound structural reforms supported by massive investment in economic and social development. In pursuance of this continuing effort, no less than \$285 billion is to be invested during the period 2010-2014 on roads and highways, railways, hospitals, dams, universities, airports, housing, desalination of seawater, building of new cities.

For sure, the current unique development effort is mainly driven by the state, through public spending. In the long run the sustainability of growth will, of course, be possible only with the emergence of a strong and competitive business sector, private and public, as the main

growth engine. This explains the incentive measures enjoyed by the business sector with the view of accelerating its modernization and enhancing its ability to challenge the globalized world economy.

Japanese companies could contribute to our development effort, through partnerships with public and private local investors. Partnership means association with local agents in a "win-win game," resulting in the transfer of knowledge and managerial skills. It may apply to the wide variety of major projects in the field of social infrastructure, or take the form of direct investment in various fields, such as the petrochemicals industry, pharmaceuticals, electronics, renewable energy, the desalination of seawater, technologies of information and communication in which Algeria is the most dynamic market in the Mediterranean, or the automobile industry in which our country has also a very dynamic market, or in the field of services such as tourism, banks and assurances.

It must be stressed that association with public, local businesses largely leaves management autonomy to the foreign partner

Reactions to earthquakes show tight Algeria-Japan bond

Akira Urabe
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-ALGERIA ASSOCIATION

Less than three weeks after the disastrous Great East Japan Earthquake, the Algerian government wired cash of \$10 million (about ¥800 million) as emergency relief, through the Japanese Red Cross Society. More than 130 countries around the globe have extended their assistance in various forms, including dispatching rescue workers and sending materials such as blankets, medical goods, water and financial support.



However, among the countries that have provided cash, Algeria has been one of the most generous countries as to the amount of emergency relief.

This generosity by the Algerian government was something Japan had seen before. After the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995, the Algerian government sent 90 large tents as emergency assistance. These tents were originally conceived to protect users from sandstorms in the Sahara, however, they were extensively utilized and were highly appreciated by the victims in Kobe. I believe that the tents' imperviousness to air proved to be extremely useful in shielding people from the chilliness of Kobe in winter.

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, during his historic official visit to Japan in December 2004, included a trip to Kobe. He visited the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institute, which was created to hand down to the future generations the experience and lessons of the great Kobe earthquake. The president personally experienced the images, sounds and tremors of the Kobe earthquake in the simulation theater in the institute. As the Ambassador of Japan to Algeria at the time, I shared the frightening trembling with the president.

Prior to this presidential visit, on May 22, 2003, I was in Toranomon Hospital for my annual health check when at about 10 a.m. the Embassy of Japan in Algeria gave me an urgent phone call via satellite to inform me that a massive earthquake had struck the capital region of Algiers at 3:44 a.m. Tokyo time (7:44 p.m. on May 21, 2003, Algeria time). The Embassy of Japan had promptly verified the request of assistance from the govern-

ment of Algeria. The Japanese government made a quick decision, within 12 hours after the earthquake, and dispatched a rescue team to Algeria. On the website of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRP), the word "JAPAN" appeared before any other country's that decided to send rescue teams to Algeria. Accompanying the first group of 17 rescue experts on its late-night flight the same day from Tokyo to Paris, I explained the security situation in Algeria and briefed the rescue team about the extensive logistical arrangements to facilitate an efficient rescue process. Rushing out of the airplane, without showing any sign of fatigue from the long flight, the rescue team worked round-the-clock with an extraordinary determination. The team succeeded in extricating a trapped but still living victim from the rubble of a collapsed hotel in Zemmouri in the suburbs of Algiers. Their professionalism was covered extensively not only in the Algerian media but also in the European

media. In addition to the total of 63 rescue personnel, Japan also dispatched to Algeria a disaster relief medical team of 22 people to engage in the treatment of injured people.

The coastal region of Algeria is known to be part of an active tectonic structure where the African plate collides with the Eurasian plate. Therefore, Algeria is prone to earthquakes like Japan. In fact, there was a devastating earthquake in 1980 in El Asnam and the Japanese emergency support was also instrumental in the rescue efforts.

There is a Japanese proverb: "A friend who helps when a friend is in need is a true friend." The mutual support that takes place in the event of a horrendous natural disaster reaffirms the important bilateral friendship between Japan and Algeria.

On the occasion of the 57th Algerian National Day on Nov. 1, let me convey my congratulations to all the people of Algeria and my gratitude for the solidarity they have recently shown and the friendship we will continue to foster.



Solidarity: Ambassador of Algeria Sid Ali Ketrandji (center) visits the devastated area of Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, on May 15 with Upper House member Azuma Konno (right). EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

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to the People of
the People's Democratic
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Algeria national day

Firm bilateral relationship for a stronger future

Keisuke Takeuchi
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-ALGERIA
ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, JAPAN
BUSINESS FEDERATION (KEIDANREN)

It is an honor to be permitted the opportunity to offer my most sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 57th National Day of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. Through this message, I also wish to express to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and to the people of Algeria my heartfelt wishes for their health and prosperity, now and for many years to come.



As you are aware, the north-east of Japan was struck at 2:46 p.m. on March 11 by a very strong earthquake, with the region suffering damage to vast coastal areas and to nuclear power plants as a result of the tsunami. More than 130 countries worldwide have expressed their heartfelt messages of support to Japan on the loss of life and the damage to property and infrastructure. I wish to especially note that Algeria made available a \$10 million donation to our country.

As chairman of the Japan-Algeria Economic Committee of the Japan Business Federation

(Keidanren), as well as on behalf of various industries in Japan, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for the wide support offered by Algeria in such a time of difficulty for us. I am confident that Japan will overcome such difficulties and emerge even stronger than before, and will thereafter wish to reciprocate in a variety of ways as a fitting response to the kindness and support received from the donating countries.

In the meantime, the Japan-Algeria Economic Committee organized a meeting in July at which H.E. Sid Ali Ketrandji, Algeria's ambassador to Japan, kindly gave a speech that served to effectively communicate the recent business environment in Algeria.

Supporting the efforts made for the recovery of the economy in Japan, Keidanren will continue to assume an appropriate role in the global economy through enhanced business opportunities with other countries. For its part, the Japan-Algeria Economic Committee would like to take the lead in strengthening the economic ties between our two countries through the further development of national resources, as well as through other areas of mutual business interest.

We are convinced of the importance of the special relationship between our nations.



Snowy landscape: Located in the north of Algeria is a major tourist destination, the Djurdjura National Park, which also has a ski resort. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

Prospects good for deeper ties

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with the public Algerian shareholder being a silent partner. It must also be noted that investment funding is available within the Algerian banking system.

Besides political stability and huge financial resources, the attractiveness of Algeria is greatly improved thanks to its very stable macroeconomic framework, reassuring classification of risk and a privileged geographical position that puts the country at the crossroads of Europe and Africa. This is thanks to, for example, new communication infrastructures like the Djen Djen harbor on the east coast, the East-West highway or the near-future Haut Plateau highway, not to mention the extremely expanded railway and telecommunications networks.

These conditions are supported by the large size of the Algerian market (36.5 million inhabitants with purchasing power), vast natural resources (oil, natural gas, uranium, gold, phosphates, etc.), important infrastructure assets in terms of electrification, telecommunication and transport, significant financial reserves, trained human resources, advantageous costs of inputs through competitive wage costs and incentives in the tax regime for foreign investments.

Considering those assets and the political and economic dynamic, the prospect of Algeria-Japan relations enjoys a rather large field of further expansion. Algerian-Japanese cooperation has a long history and Japanese companies have achieved a lot, especially in the hydrocarbons sector, but also in maritime transport and public works. For instance, the eastern part of the East-West highway, currently being constructed built by the COJAAL Japan consortium, will certainly be seen in the near future as the most eloquent symbol of a confident Algeria Japan relationship.

In that spirit, the two countries have started negotiating an agreement for mutual protection of investment. In the political sphere, we intend to hold in 2012 the first meeting of the political consultation mechanism formally settled during Maehara's visit to Algeria. Indeed, there are many issues of mutual interest prone to bilateral consultations, one of them being Africa, where Algeria is doing its utmost in an effort to contribute to economic integration. The Trans-Saharan Highway linking the north of Algeria to Mali and Niger, the pipeline for Nigerian natural gas to be exported from Algeria, the optic fiber network with Nigeria, the Adrar African University are some examples of Algeria's contribution.

In the same vein, Japanese solidarity and concrete support to Africa is, of course, a strong factor of rapprochement between Algeria and Japan.

Bilateral cooperation is also spreading to new domains like academic and interuniversity exchanges, thanks to the agreement signed in 2010 between the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the University of Tsukuba in Ibaraki Prefecture, representing the all Japanese universities, to encourage joint scientific research in various fields.

Technical cooperation ruled by the agreement signed in 2004, on the occasion of the official visit of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to Japan, is evolving in a satisfactory manner. In that vein, I would only mention the ambitious Sahara Solar Breeder project between the University of Science and Technology of Oran and Japanese universities.

Next year, Algeria and Japan will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations. No doubt, that celebration will be conducted with a great deal of trust in the good future of our bilateral cooperation.