

Angola national day

Foreign investment needed for infrastructure reconstruction

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MINISTER-COUNSELOR OF ANGOLA

On Nov. 11, the Angolan people celebrate, with joy, pride, excitement and hope for the future, the 36th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Angola.

We would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the people and government of the Republic of Angola and of H. E. President José Eduardo dos Santos, convey our deepest sympathies and encouragement to the people and government of Japan, in particular to the families and victims of the tragedy of March 11, hopeful that the hardships brought by such unfortunate events will be overcome soon.

Angola was a Portuguese colony for nearly five centuries. After the end of World War II, Angolans were hopeful that freedom was at last just around the corner. However, with the loss of Brazil as a colony coupled with Angola's abundant reserves of natural resources, Portugal wanted at all costs to maintain its grip on Angola. Therefore, Portugal simply changed the status of Angola from colony to "overseas province."

The Portuguese colonial and dictatorial government's failure to heed the Angolan people's demand for independence forced Angolan nationalists to take up arms against the Portuguese authorities in the early 1960s. Thus, Feb. 4, 1961, marked the beginning of the armed struggle for the total liberation and independence of the territory that today is known as the Republic of Angola.

Following 14 years of armed struggle for Angola's independence, a coup d'état and the subsequent overthrow of the dictatorial regime of Portugal on April 25, 1974, ushered in a new hope for the Angolan people, as the new Portuguese government was willing to sit at the negotiation table with Angolan nationalists to find a solution to end the war.

It is in this new framework that on Jan. 15, 1975, the Alvor Agreement was signed by the two sides, through which the foundations were created to form a transitional government to lead Angola until independence was proclaimed on Nov. 11, 1975. Unfortunately, achieving independence did not mean the end of the war, but its continuation for a longer and more destructive one, which began even before the declaration of independence was pronounced, ending only on April 4, 2002, with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding Addendum to the Lusaka Protocol by the Angolan government and UNITA.

The achievement of peace in Angola is for us Angolans one of the greatest accomplishments in the recent history of our people. It is a moment of unparalleled importance in our history and never experienced before.

We Angolans see peace in Angola as fair because it did not

come from any external imposition, but a result of the effort and determination of the Angolan people to achieve peace alongside of national reconstruction. This corresponds to the deepest interests and aspirations of all Angolans, without exception.

In Angola, we also say that this is a lasting peace because we all recognize the need to consolidate and defend it day-to-day, through practical actions, with all Angolans earnestly contributing to make this process irreversible.

Nonetheless, peace in Angola also brings enormous challenges to the people and government of the Republic of Angola, since it is necessary to continue carrying out efforts to consolidate it, through actions aimed at fighting poverty in order to build up a united, harmonious and mature nation, guided by values such as national unity, social justice and the strengthening of human rights.

With great civic pride and patriotism, the Angolan people showed to the world its maturity on Sept. 5 and 6, 2008, by electing with a high sense of responsibility and civility, and in peace, harmony and fraternity, its representatives to the National Assembly.

It is in this environment that Angola now builds its own place among the top African nations, both politically and economically.

In light of the current situation in the country, the Angolan government, aiming for a rapid and sustained reduction of poverty in the country, has established a strategy to combat this evil. This strategy created in the context of the consolidation of peace in the country, and based on the goals and priorities defined in the government's program aims to achieve a comprehensive and sustained economic and social development, as well as a substantial reduction of poverty, under the framework of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, counting on the support of the international community to fill in the gaps in the funding required to pursue such an ambitious program.

Given that the more than 40 years of war that Angola was

plunged in, particularly during the post-independence period, by its very violent and destructive nature, resulted in the partial or total destruction of its key infrastructures, the reconstruction of these infrastructures is at the center of the priorities of the Angolan government, as well as in the promotion of a favorable social and economic environment, which constitutes the basis for a sustainable development process that is balanced and comprehensive.

Under its strategies to combat poverty, the Angolan government has established some priorities:

1. Social reintegration of refugees, displaced persons and war-torn, and civil protection
2. Food security and rural development
3. HIV-AIDS and education
4. Health
5. Basic infrastructure
6. Employment and training
7. Macroeconomic management, among others

As we have previously mentioned, the Angolan economy was largely affected by the war factor, resulting in the downgrading of the country to among those classified as the poorest ones on the planet, despite Angola being increasingly seen as one of the potentially richest countries in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of natural resources, including water and aquatic and forest areas, as well as because of its abundant and fertile soil, favorable climate for the practice of farming, immeasurable potential for the development of tourism, etc.

Regarding the agricultural sector, until 1973, Angola ranked third among the world's largest producers of coffee, surpassed only by Brazil and Colombia, was self-sufficient in most varieties of cereal, produced surpluses in potato, rice, banana, sugar cane, sisal, cotton, peanuts, and many of these products were exported to European markets and beyond. Angola also has ideal conditions for raising livestock such as cows, goats and pigs, which until 1975 played a very important role in the economy. A potential also destroyed as a result of the war.

In terms of mineral resources, the country has abundant re-

serves of oil and diamonds, and is considered now as the second major oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa, and perhaps in all of Africa, or, who knows, in all of the world. Angola has also important reserves of iron ore, copper, manganese, phosphate, mica, lead, tin, uranium, silver, platinum, etc., whose exploration was also totally or partially paralyzed as a result of war, which nearly froze industrial activity.

In the chapter of rail transport in Angola, it consists of five main lines connecting the coast to the interior, among them the most important being the Benguela Railway, which links the port of Lobito in the south to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a result of the war, almost all rail routes were seriously damaged or totally destroyed.

The destructive effects of war are also present on the road system, as can be seen in the destruction of many bridges and roads.

There are several ports in Angola, of which the most important ones are those of Luanda, Lobito, Namibe and Cabinda, which, although not directly affected by the war, suffered from its indirect effects and could not get the necessary maintenance and modernization, and as a result they are not currently fully operational.

As many infrastructures in Angola are in need of repair and modernization, there is a boom in the construction industry, which currently accounts for 29 percent of the foreign investment in the country. The real estate sector, which is suffering a serious deficit, is attracting to Angola some of the major foreign construction companies and real estate developers.

In the chapter on air transport, the main airports are located in Luanda, Huambo, Benguela, Cabinda, Bie, Kuando, Malange. Most of them are currently undergoing renovation, expansion and modernization, with the participation of foreign companies.

Regarding the fisheries sector, Angola's long coastline, which stretches over 1,600 km, benefiting from the effects of the cold Benguela current, make the country a huge source of marine resources whose exploitation has not yet reached the desired levels, due to the lack of financial resources required for the installation and upgrading of fisheries-supporting infrastructures.

In this perspective, through this interview we want to highlight that anyone who visited Angola a few years ago will find now a new country, more dynamic and secure, with a huge potential and a stable economy, and, as we have mentioned before, Angola is currently going through the most prosperous moment of its history, in all respects, making the country into one of the best destinations to invest.

Therefore, we strongly appeal to investors and businessmen from Japan to come work with us for a better tomorrow by conducting and setting up business in Angola.

Finally, we would like to reiterate that all entrepreneurs



New town: Located 30 km northwest of the capital Luanda, Kilamba Kiaxi is a municipality of the metropolitan area and its housing project (right) is the largest under construction in Angola. EMBASSY OF ANGOLA

and businesspeople of Japan are welcome in Angola. Please do not hesitate to organize missions to survey the market and eventually establish business in the Republic of Angola, using for this purpose the services available at the Embassy of the Republic of Angola, located at: 2-10-24 Daizawa, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 155-0032; Tel.: 03-5430-7879 and Fax: 03-5712-7481.

Thank you and see you soon. We are looking forward to seeing you in Angola.



Winding road: The Serra da Leba mountain range has some of Angola's most spectacular scenic spots. EMBASSY OF ANGOLA

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to the People of
the Republic of Angola
on the Occasion of
the 36th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day

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