

Cameroon national day

Upholding peace, unity and patriotism

Pierre Ndzengue
AMBASSADOR OF CAMEROON

On the occasion of the celebration of 43rd National Day of Cameroon, it gives me immense pleasure to extend on behalf of the entire staff of the Embassy of Cameroon and myself, the most sincere wishes of good will and health to Their Imperial Majesties, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.

In the same vein, I would like to express my appreciation to the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in its determination to foster and build strong bilateral ties between Japan and Cameroon.

The celebrations this year are taking place under a very challenging environment. For over one year our country, particularly in its northern regions, has been the victim of attacks and



threats from the Boko Haram insurgency operating from Nigeria while the eastern region has suffered from armed groups from the Central African Republic. The situation has given rise to a great loss of life and property and the disruption of many activities in the affected regions. As well as affecting the security and stability of the entire nation, this situation has also created an influx of refugees from Nigeria and the Central African Republic, as well as thousands of internally displaced people in those parts of the country. Consequently, the existing social infrastructure and facilities in those regions have been overwhelmed.

The national response to these external threats to the peace and stability of the country has been tremendous; starting with the soldiers who have been selfless in their defense of the fatherland to the spontaneous and generous contributions of the general public to the war effort. This spontane-

ous support has come in the form of peace marches as well as material and financial contribution to the war effort. So far this has led to collection of over \$3 million and many hundreds of tons of food and other daily necessities.

The celebrations this year have therefore focused on the threat to the nation's stability and territorial integrity and the need to uphold the watchwords of unity, peace and patriotism. It was an opportunity to rally all Cameroonians to the defense of the fatherland and the war against fundamentalism and intolerance. It was also the time to bring into centre stage the plight of our brothers and sisters who are the direct victims of the insurgency.

In Tokyo, though the celebrations are belated, we are using this day to highlight our country's commitment to maintain its unity and peace and its determination to bring the threat posed by the insurgency to an end.

We are consequently grateful to our international friends and partners such as Japan who have come to our assistance during this most difficult and trying period. We thank the government of Japan, which in February this year allocated \$17.5 million to help us cope with the refugee situation we are facing.

Despite this particularly difficult security atmosphere, the government is still focused on fulfilling its economic and development agenda of making the country an emerging economy by 2035. In this regard it has put in place a three-year emergency infrastructure-building program. Scheduled to go operational this year, it is worth over \$1 billion. This fast track program will cover investments in the areas of road construction, town planning, energy, water, health, agriculture and security. Major international financial institutions are to provide long-term funding for this program.