

Namibia National Day

Building on foundation of unity, democracy

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On March 21, 1990, Namibia gained its independence.

Namibia, which was called German South-West Africa, was a German colony from 1884 to 1915. After World War I, the administration of

the territory was handed over to the League of Nations and later to South Africa, which administered the territory until 28 years ago.

After 28 years Namibia has so much to be grateful for. First, we are grateful that despite many challenges we have managed to maintain peace and unity.

Second, we have a reason to celebrate; inspired by having been able to build a strong resilient and inclusive Namibian house, where no Namibian feels left out.

Third, we have embraced the Harambee Prosperity Plan; an action plan toward prosperity for all that requires all Namibians to pull together in the same direction.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly is that as a nation, we pride ourselves that since independence we have been able to maintain the principles of democracy, unity and stability.

As the first Namibian ambassador to Japan, notwithstanding that the bilateral relations between the two countries were

only established on March 21, 1990, Japan continues to render support to Namibia in various fields such as expanding grant projects in social sectors.

In promoting Namibia's economic growth and for Namibia to become a hub for international trade, Japan continues to support infrastructure development, including the project to upgrade Walvis Bay Port.

However, our biggest challenge for economic development is as a country rich in mineral resources, Namibia exports raw materials and imports finished products, but we do not have the skilled labor force and technology to process our raw materials into finished products. This is where Japan is crucial to Namibia, as Japan possesses the necessary technology.

Namibia has a strong macroeconomic architecture. Our economy might be small, but according to the World Bank, it is one of the best-managed economies on the African continent. Supported by prudent fiscal and monetary policy, our budget deficits have been contained within sustainable levels, translating into Namibia having one of the lowest debt levels.

Further supporting our economic architecture is a sound financial system and a strong savings culture. The World Economic Forum rates the strength of our banking system as 22nd in the world.

The government of Namibia remains committed to managing the economy in a prudent and responsible manner, and has already instituted revenue expenditure and

structural reform measures to address concerns raised by rating agencies about the medium-term outlook of Namibia.

The February economic outlook indicated that growth is projected to accelerate during 2018 and 2019, and as such, the Namibian economy is expected to recover gradually.

In its aspirations to achieve levels of economic development similar to those of the developed countries, Namibia's policy of industrialization and its implementation strategy is "Growth at Home," which was launched in 2015. This lays a strong foundation for economic diversification and job creation. In its policy for promoting micro, small and medium enterprises adopted in 2016, the Namibian government recognizes that a vibrant entrepreneurship culture and a conducive business investment climate are key imperatives for competitiveness and successful industrialization.

It is encouraging to see that the Japanese government is willing to support its companies to engage further in Africa. And as Namibia is endowed with rich natural and mineral resources, we welcome Japanese companies to make Namibia one of their priority investment destinations in Africa.

I feel privileged that I am representing my country in a classic example of a success story of development where there is so much for Namibia to learn.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Japanese government and people for the valuable support and cooperation with Namibia over the years.