

Nigeria Independence Day Special

Working for peace and stability

MOHAMMED GANA YISA
AMBASSADOR OF NIGERIA



Today marks 58 years of Nigeria's nationhood. It is therefore, my singular honor and privilege to address the good people of Japan along with our friends of goodwill on this October

occasion. Permit me then to extend warm wishes of sound health and longevity to their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as the entire Imperial household.

I also wish to, on behalf of President Muhammadu Buhari, convey fraternal wishes to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and good people of Japan, and to my compatriots in Japan as we celebrate this happy and auspicious independence anniversary celebration.

On assumption of office on May 29, 2015, the president pledged a three-pronged program. Namely, diversification of the nation's economy, tackling insecurity and a robust fight against corruption. I am happy to inform that all the set targets have so far been sufficiently achieved. The government's focus has since shifted to the massive Agricultural Promotion Policy, with emphasis on domestic production of rice, wheat, maize, fish, dairy milk, poultry, beans and fruits, among other resources. This is all in an attempt to rely less on oil, the prices of which fluctuate and become detrimental to stable economic growth.

As for the security situation in Nigeria, I am assuring the Japanese business community of the safety of their investments in Nigeria because the president's administration has successfully contained and degraded the hitherto terrorist activities of Boko Haram insurgents. Although the insurgents' actions have been reduced to perpetrating opportunistic attacks on soft targets, this is also being neutralized by ongoing operations conducted by the Nigerian security forces in collaboration with neighboring countries through the Multinational Joint Task Force. Japan has assisted Nigeria financially, with contributions totaling \$3.5 million in Africa, for the maintenance of internally displaced persons. There is no formal defense agreement

between Nigeria and Japan, but the government of Japan recognizes the stabilizing role played by Nigeria in the West African subregion. Japan has always expressed readiness to support Nigeria in the maintenance of peace and stability in the Sahel region. In addition, the Diet passed a special resolution in 2014 calling on the government of Japan to assist Nigeria in tackling Boko Haram insurgents in parts of northeast Nigeria.

In Nigeria-Japan relations, the embassy had two high-level visits from Nigeria — namely, Minister of Defense Mohammed Mansur Dan Ali and former President Olusegun Obasanjo. Similarly, the Honorable Kiyoshi Ejima of the House of Councilors led a two-man delegation to Nigeria in January where they conferred with Nigeria's ministers of foreign affairs, finance, budget and national planning. The Honorable State Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Tsukasa Akimoto was in Nigeria in September where a Memorandum of Understanding on Transportation Infrastructure in Nigeria was signed by him and Nigeria's Honorable Minister of Transportation Rotimi Amaechi. Earlier in 2015, the Honorable Ichiro Aisawa of the House of Representatives was at the president's inauguration.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency has, within the year, assisted Nigeria in the execution of various projects, including rural water supply, basic education, health and rural electrification, female empowerment and agricultural projects such as rice production. For example, emergency improvement of electricity supply facilities was executed with grant assistance worth

about ¥1.3 billion in Abuja. This started in Abuja in 2015 and concluded the same year before being handed over to the Nigerian government in May. Last year, Japan gave grants in support of agriculture and health of ¥200 million. Just recently on Sept. 21, Japan gave a grant of \$21 million to assist in the rehabilitation of the Apapa road power transmission line. This is expected to improve power supply quality by 78 percent. Similarly, under the African Business Education Initiative, the government of Japan has boosted Nigeria and indeed Africa's capacity development. In this regard, about 36 Nigerians are currently undergoing master's and Ph.D. programs in different fields within Japan.

The forthcoming seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VII) to be held in 2019 in Yokohama is expected to further consolidate the progress of Japan in Nigeria relations along these lines. It is a source of joy to inform you that since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1960, the robust political and economic ties between the two countries have continued to grow even stronger, especially through high-level leadership contacts and diplomatic engagements. It is therefore, hoped that the forthcoming TICAD VII will further strengthen these relations for the mutual benefit of our two brotherly nations.

The Japan-Nigeria Parliamentary Group was recently formed with Honorable Kazunori Tanaka of the House of Representatives chairing the Japanese side and Senator Rafiu Ibrahim co-chairing the Nigerian side.

Once again, permit me to congratulate the government and good people of Japan for their renewed vigor toward the facilitation of investment and various businesses in Nigeria. While Japan is ranked among the world's most innovative countries, in leading global patents, the typical Nigerian entrepreneurial spirit is globally competitive, and this will naturally galvanize deeper relations between Nigeria and Japan.

Most importantly, however, permit me through this medium to extend my sincere appreciation to the various Japanese companies and organizations who have continually partnered with us.

Once again, I congratulate all our compatriots, especially the ever-supportive leadership and membership of the Nigerian community in Japan, which at last count stood at about 5,000 strong. On behalf of myself, the staff of the Nigerian embassy in Japan, please accept my warm felicitations and heartfelt congratulations on this year's anniversary, which is

another milestone in the annals of Nigeria's history as we march toward a greater future together.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!
Long live Japan!

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

Congratulations to the People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the 58th Anniversary of Their Independence



Minato Mirai Grand Central Tower
4-6-2, Minatomirai, Nishi-ku
Yokohama 220-8765, Japan
www.chiyodacorp.com

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