

South Africa national day

South Africa celebrates 15 years of freedom

Gert Johannes Grobler
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC
OF SOUTH AFRICA

It is my privilege to address the readers of The Japan Times as we celebrate the 15th anniversary of South Africa's National Day, Freedom Day, which commemorates the country's first democratic elections held in 1994. The elections were a momentous and inspirational time, not only for South Africans but for all humanity.

I would like to express, on behalf of our president, the government and the people of South Africa, our best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, Prime Minister Tarō Aso, and the government and friendly people of Japan. South Africans are appreciative of Japan's continued engagement, not only in South Africa but on the whole African continent.

It is South Africa's sincere desire to actively consolidate and further expand its multifaceted cooperation with Japan in an increasing number of sectors.

An important landmark in relations will be reached in 2010, the centennial of official relations between the two countries. Japan appointed an honorary consul in Cape Town in 1910. A number of events will take place in Japan and South Africa to celebrate this important milestone.

South Africa held its fourth general elections April 22, in an atmosphere of peace and stability, a further manifestation of our young but vibrant democracy. The importance of the outcome of these elections is that stability and continuity will be maintained.

South African society has come through an amazing period of evolution in the past 15 years. It has been a journey of hard work, resilience and hope. We can truly say that we have advanced the cause of

human development and human dignity in our country since 1994.

* Our democracy is steadily growing stronger, underpinned by a constitution hardly equaled in the world, and a vigorously independent judiciary and free press.

* We have determined, resilient and creative people in our country of 48 million people. Our people are our greatest assets. Few people abroad realize that South Africa has produced seven Nobel Prize winners in various categories over the last five decades.

* After the economic stagnation of the late 1980s and early '90s, South Africa has experienced the longest period of sustained economic growth, with a current GDP of approx \$280 billion and GDP per capita of \$10,500. In the period 1994 to 2004, economic growth averaged 3 percent per year. This improved to 5 percent per year on average from 2004 to 2007.

* Our economy has become more open and integrated into the global system. Our diversified financial institutions are sound, which has somewhat sheltered us from the recent global economic storms. We expect our banks to continue to extend credit to worthy customers.

* Poverty has been reduced. Over the last 10 years, 2.6 million subsidized houses have been completed. Many more households have access to water and sanitation.

* Progress in the social sector is also seen in massive improvements in access to primary health facilities. Some 95 percent of South Africans now live within 5 km of a health facility. Research into HIV prevalence demonstrates stabilization and a slight reduction in rates of infection. Our antiretroviral treatment program is the largest in the world and is expanding. Over 700,000 patients have been initiated on antiretroviral treatment since the commencement of the program.

* In education there is almost universal access in terms of enrollment at ele-

mentary level and an improvement in the number of pupils passing mathematics.

* The scourge of crime remains a challenge. Combating crime is a top priority for the government, and additional funds are being made available to drastically improve South Africa's policing and criminal justice system.

South Africa clearly continues to make rapid strides in terms of its democracy, sustainable economic growth and providing for the socioeconomic needs of its people.

Many challenges remain as the global economic meltdown poses serious dangers for our economy in job losses and the quality of life of our people.

Because South Africa is so strongly integrated into the world economy, demand for our exports is also declining; access to finance and inflows of capital have turned for the worse; lower demand has precipitated a scaling down of production; the creation of jobs is negatively affected. We have been forced to scale down our forecasts in terms of growth and job creation. South Africa is technically not in a recession and we are still looking at positive growth in our economy, albeit much lower than anticipated. We expect output growth to improve somewhat in 2010, supported by public infrastructure spending, lower interest rates, the 2010 FIFA World Cup and a recovery in the world economy.

South Africa is fortunately less severely affected than many other countries. Indeed, in a period in which others are experiencing or projecting recessions, South Africa and the rest of the continent are poised for growth, even if at a slower rate.

The South African government, together with leaders of its various social partners, agreed jointly to devise interventions that would minimize the impact of this global crisis, focusing on the following areas:

* Investing approximately \$8 billion in infrastructure de-

velopment over the next three years.

* Accelerating the Expanded Public Works program, and working with business to mitigate job losses and accelerate skills development.

* Strengthening our development finance institutions, and supporting industrial restructuring and agricultural development.

* Expanding our social assistance programs to reach over 13 million people, and increasing public expenditure on education and health care.

Both in the Group of 20 meetings, at which South Africa is an active participant, and other interactions in multilateral institutions, South Africa has argued for appropriate and urgent interventions particularly in the developed countries whence the crisis originated, and where it is most severe. South Africa also strongly advocated support for developing countries and fundamental reform of the international financial architecture.

Let me now turn to South Africa's bilateral relations with Japan. South Africa regards Japan as a strategic partner inter alia due to its strong and diverse economy, its excellence in science, technology and research, and the growing responsible role that Japan is playing globally. The bilateral relations between South Africa and Japan are excellent, with tremendous scope for further improvement. The embassy has, therefore, set itself the following objectives over the next few years:

* To step up the level and frequency of political consultations between South Africa and Japan, not only on bilateral cooperation but also on important issues related to the African continent and pressing global issues, such as restructuring of the international financial architecture, U.N. reform, climate change, and nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.

* To actively explore opportunities to further deepen and widen economic cooperation

into a mutually beneficial long-term strategic partnership.

* To actively expand the people-to-people contacts between South Africa and Japan in sectors such as cultural exchange, academic exchange, sports and tourism.

As far as political consultations are concerned, we have a bilateral mechanism between South Africa and Japan that is called the South Africa-Japan Partnership Forum (PF). Since its inception in 1998, the PF has had several successful meetings, the last having taken place this January in Japan.

I am pleased to state that Japan and South Africa's science and technology cooperation is growing from strength to strength. In this context, the South Africa-Japan University Forum established in 2008 is playing an important coordinating and implementing role.

Japan-South Africa development cooperation is an institutionalized long-term commitment between our two countries, and South Africa is dedicated to strengthening this partnership.

There is appreciation in South Africa and Africa for the constructive and consistent approach by Japan toward the challenges facing Africa, particularly in the context of TICAD and the Group of Eight. South Africa and Africa were encouraged by the constructive outcome of the TICAD ministerial meeting in Botswana this March. South Africa as an integral and active member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) welcomed the decision to reactivate the Japan-SADC High-level Dialogue, which last met in 2004. The Japanese business community should take note of the exciting economic potential of the SADC as a region.

South Africa-Japan economic ties are strong and have huge potential. Japan was South Africa's top trading partner globally in 2008, with total trade between the two countries amounting to approximately \$11 billion, having grown from \$4.9 billion in 2000. It should, however, be anticipated, that the global economic downturn would impact negatively on trade flows in the short term.

We have recently created a Joint Economic Commission under the auspices of the PF, where METI and its South African counterpart are actively deliberating on ways to expand economic ties. Another important pillar of our economic relationship has been the Japan-South Africa Business Forum, which is led by Nippon Keidanren and Business Leadership South Africa.

The South African Chamber of Commerce in Japan (SACCCJ) was established in 2008 to promote trade and commerce, as well as friendship and cultural relations between South Africa and Japan. The SACCCJ's membership is steadily expanding, reflecting grow-

ing interest in the promotion of economic ties (see www.saccjapan.jp).

There are very attractive investment opportunities for Japanese companies in a number of sectors: agricultural processing, automotive and transport industries, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, mining and metal-based industries, electrotechnical industries, aerospace and marine industries, and tourism infrastructure development.

Why invest in South Africa?:
- Macroeconomic stability
- A well-developed financial services sector backed by a sound regulatory and legal framework

- A well-established infrastructure/service industries, ports and roads, telecommunications

- A healthy, sound manufacturing base

- It has developed leading technologies, particularly in the fields of energy and fuels, metals, telecommunications, deep-level mining, ICT, etc.

South Africa is one of the world's top producers and holders of reserves of commodities such as the platinum group of metals, vanadium, chromium, gold, manganese ore, titanium, coal, copper and many others. South Africa has considerable potential for the discovery of other world-class deposits in areas yet to be exhaustively explored. In fact, South Africa's prolific mineral reserves include precious metals and minerals, energy minerals, nonferrous metals, ferrous minerals and industrial minerals.

South Africa has a high level of technical and production expertise, comprehensive research and development activities, and also boasts world-class primary-processing facilities for gold, platinum, carbon steel, stainless steel and aluminum. Lucrative investment opportunities exist for downstream processing and adding value locally to many of these minerals and metals.

South Africa would like to enter into a long-term strategic relationship with Japan, which needs these minerals for its industry. What South Africa would like to see is enhanced involvement by Japan in the exploration and development of this sector through direct investment, which will be mutually beneficial.

South Africa also appreciates the support of the government of Japan to much-needed skills development in South Africa through the establishment in Japan of the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) Working Group, which mobilizes Japanese stakeholders from across the spectrum (public, private and civil society institutions) to assist with human resource capacity building.

The embassy strives to strengthen people-to-people contacts with Japan through the systematic development of our tourism, cultural and sporting contacts. South Africa is a veritable tourist paradise with spectacular, breathtaking and varied scenery, magnificent



Cape Town landmark: Majestic Table Mountain dominates the city skyline. SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

wildlife, great biodiversity, and a friendly people with many different cultures and traditions. Japanese visitors appreciate the wonderful Namaqualand flowers, which form carpets of color, and the purple alleys of Jacaranda trees in the capital city, Pretoria. The country's many highlights and competitive pricing provide a firm foundation for the development of tourism.

The 2010 Soccer World Cup presents many opportunities for enhancing our mutual interactions and visibility. When South Africa was awarded the 2010 FIFA World Cup there were celebrations throughout the country and the African continent. South Africa stands ready, not as a country alone, but rather as a representative of Africa, to host an amazing and successful World Cup in 2010.

Despite negative reports in the media at times that South Africa will not be ready for 2010, the facts are that South Africa is well on track with its preparations to host a successful and colorful World Cup. Security remains high on the priority list of the government and the local organizing committee, and both are working closely with experts from around the world to ensure that all visitors will have a safe stay. Virtually all the projects and plans are

completed or nearing completion, from stadiums, transport infrastructure, security measures, issues of accommodations, to health and immigration plans.

But beyond this, the true legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup will be in our ability to showcase South African and African capacity, hospitality and humanity — to change once and for all, perceptions of our country and our continent among nations of the world.

South Africa therefore wishes the Japanese national soccer team every success in its campaign to qualify for the World Cup and looks forward to welcoming a large number of Japanese visitors to this spectacular event.

To conclude my message to Japan Times readers, I would like to state that it is an honor for me to serve in Japan. Japan is a fascinating country with a long history, rich culture and embedded traditions. Japan's kind people, modern economy and technological prowess, coupled with its commitment to South Africa's development through bilateral and multilateral processes, will ensure that my stay in this great country is very rewarding.

Thank you.
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On April 27, 2009, South Africans celebrate Freedom Day, commemorating the country's first democratic elections in 1994.

And only 16 short years after the momentous events of 1994 South Africa is proudly hosting the 2010 World Cup — the biggest soccer event on the planet.

But that's not all. 2009 sees South Africa warming up for the 2010 World Cup with a host of global megaevents, including the Confederations Cup, the Indian Premier League Cricket Tournament, the ICC Champions Trophy and the Lions Rugby Tour.

These events and many oth-

ers bear testimony to the distance that South Africa has traveled as a nation, an economy and world-class host in the last 15 years.

And if current demand for 2010 tickets is anything to go by, soccer fans from across the world will be descending on South Africa to share in the excitement, originality and success of Africa's first World Cup.

Tourism is South Africa's biggest business success story since rejoining the world in 1994. It is also the industry best placed to benefit from the 2010 World Cup bonanza.

While accommodations upgrades, global experience, increased sophistication of tour operator programs and, above all, business growth will all be positive spinoffs from 2010, the tournament is not an end in it-

self. Instead, it is a point on the road to growing tourism arrivals, the industry and the broader South African economy — well beyond 2010.

As such, South Africa invites Japanese travelers and soccer fans to experience its unique and diverse tourism offerings. Each of South Africa's provinces has its special treasures. Beautiful coastlines span from the Western Cape, through the Eastern Cape to Kwa-Zulu Natal. Majestic mountains and wide-open spaces delight the traveler to Free State and Northern Cape. Breathtaking views enchant and haunt the soul in Mpumalanga, North West Province and Limpopo. While a vibrant city and night life pulses to the jazz of Africa in Gauteng.

For more information on tourism and the 2010 FIFA World Cup visit South African Tourism's newly launched Japanese Web site at www.south-africa.jp.

This Freedom Day South Africa invites all its friends in Japan and throughout the world to celebrate the achievements of its young democracy as the country prepares to celebrate with the world during the 2010 World Cup.

"Ke Nako. Celebrate Africa's Humanity" — share the fun and excitement of Africa's first World Cup.

Come hear the blast of a thousand "vuvuzelas" as you dance to the rhythm of Africa celebrating and share the joy of a newly awakened people proud to host the world — South Africa 2010.

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on the 15th Anniversary
of the Freedom Day
of the Republic of South Africa

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