

Benin national day

Reforms, international support key to ongoing progress



Administrative makeup: Benin is divided into 12 departments and subdivided into 77 communes. BENIN EMBASSY

Allassane Yasso
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN

On the occasion of the celebration of the 49th anniversary of Benin National Day, on behalf of the Benin head of state, President Dr. Boni Yayi, and in the name of the people of Benin, I extend our greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Taro Aso and his government, and the people of Japan.



The 49th anniversary of Benin's independence takes place within the context of the international financial crisis, and together with an economic crisis that has strongly hit and continues to hit Benin.

But despite this international context, which is particularly difficult for developing countries, the government of Benin continues tirelessly to implement its program of action that seeks growth through poverty reduction and a policy of development clearly defined since 2006.

It's a policy of reforms at various levels, which aims at improving the life of all Beninese households, especially the poorest and most vulnera-

ble segments of the population.

It should be emphasized, in this dynamic, which should in the medium term transform Benin into an emerging nation, the contribution and substantial support that the government and its people receive from friendly countries, and technical and financial partners, one of which is Japan, whose assistance and cooperation are well known, and highly appreciated in Benin. Indeed, Japan has supported and continues to support the implementation of important projects that have a dominant social impact, and although it would be tedious to list them in detail here, they include programs for water supply, construction, and equipment for school infrastructure and health, etc.

It would be difficult or impossible for us to ignore the large and important ongoing project of renovation, extension and rehabilitation of the "L'Hopital de la Mere et de l'Enfant-Lagune (HOMEL)" in the city of Cotonou. This is one of the jewels of the dynamic cooperation that a united Benin and Japan share, and which has in recent years enjoyed great progress.

The recent participation, in May 2008, of President



President Boni Yayi of Benin

Yayi at TICAD IV in Yokohama has given new impetus to this partnership that the Beninese people appreciate. This momentum will be strengthened by the opening in a few months of the Embassy of Japan in Cotonou. This is a clear demonstration of the importance of the friendship and cooperation that bind Benin and Japan.

So we welcome these steps, and invite business people and other Japanese economic operators to invest in Benin, and discover the large integrated market of the

ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) region, with more than 270 million potential consumers, guaranteed by the principle of free movement of people, goods and services.

Benin is a single point of reference for the simplification of access, business and investment. It is a modern and competitive seaport with a dynamic workforce and low

production costs. It is impossible to talk about Benin without mentioning the impressive safari opportunities available with W Transborder Park ("Parc Regional W") — three contiguous national parks in Benin, Niger and Burkina Faso — in the northeast, and Pendjari National Park in the northwest of the country, on the top of which, there are other assets:

- A wealth of different cultures, historic and natural
- The security of tourists
- Old kingdoms, Ouidah, the riparian towns

- Rich culture: gospel singing, voodoo, craftsmanship, folk dancing
- The diversity of land-

- scapes: beaches, animal reserves, waterfalls, forests.
- Happy National Day to all Beninese living in Japan!

**Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Benin
on the Occasion of
the 49th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day**

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