

Cote d'Ivoire independence day

Recovery brings republic back to peace, stability path

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AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY
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OF COTE D'IVOIRE TO JAPAN

On the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the independence of Côte d'Ivoire, I would like to present on behalf of H.E. Laurent Gbagbo, president of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the government, the Ivorian people and



on my own behalf, warm and respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, as well as Prime Minister Taro Aso, the government and people of Japan.

In my capacity as ambassador of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire to Japan, it is a great privilege to take advantage of my address to the esteemed readers of The Japan Times and all our partners in Japan to look into the political and socioeconomic situation of Côte d'Ivoire in the light of the major events of the year.

Côte d'Ivoire has been affected by a political crisis that started in September 2002. Hopefully, under the Ouagadougou political agreement signed March 4, 2007, the country is recovering steadily, and getting back on track for peace and stability.

Thanks to this improving situation, Côte d'Ivoire can commit itself to achieving its goal of poverty alleviation and

human security.

In this regard, the country can rely on its prosperous agricultural sector, which remains the pivotal foundation of its development. It is therefore important to mention that agriculture provides about 70 percent of the country's export revenue, which is led by double-digit cocoa-coffee, cotton, rubber and cashew nuts. For example, Côte d'Ivoire, with 330,000 tons in 2008, has become the second-largest producer of cashew nuts in the world. Côte d'Ivoire also has good harvests of bananas and pineapples, even though it faces competition from other countries.

Although the processing rates of these various products remain low, the recent investment incentives will allow, especially for cocoa, an average processing rate close to 50 percent in the near future. Thus it is important to mention that the Centre National de Recherche Agronomique (CNRA), through its technological research station, has developed a range of excellent-quality liquors named "Cordial" composed of coffee liquor, cocoa liquor and ginger liquor. Samples of these products, exhibited during the African Festa 2008 and 2009 in Yokohama, were really appreciated by Japanese visitors.

Besides the export crops, Côte d'Ivoire is self-sufficient in yams, cassava and plantains, and will be in rice, soon.

Côte d'Ivoire has important potential in mining and energy. Two gold mines are under

exploitation and several exploration works undertaken for many years have led to the discovery of a lot of mineral deposits (iron, copper, nickel, manganese, bauxite) and industrial materials (dimension stones, clay for bricks, glass sand).

Natural gas potential is also important and the country is likely to increase its crude oil production, especially with the Baobab wells, which have huge reserves that could push the country to becoming a major producer.

Moreover, the country has very good economic infrastructure, including an important road and rail network that allows rapid links between the main cities of the country, and facilitates the supply of goods to neighboring countries. Two international airports, particularly Abidjan airport, which are served by several international airlines, offer more than 200 flights a week.

Côte d'Ivoire has also two modern international harbors (Abidjan and San Pedro), which are used as transit ports by some landlocked countries. The Abidjan Port Authority is progressively imposing itself not only as the first tuna port in Africa but also as the first transit and transshipment port in the subregion; commodities traffic at the Abidjan Port Authority increased by 11 percent in the first half of this year.

Côte d'Ivoire's location, its economic infrastructure and its attractive investment policy make it a good place to in-

vest in West Africa. I would like to emphasize in this regard that the Investment Code, issued in 1995, is intended to be more open in terms of the incentives it offers, transparent and accessible.

Indeed, numerous investment opportunities exist in the country for private business in the framework of the transfer of the capital city to Yamoussoukro, the building of a free zone of communication technologies in Grand-Bassam, as well as in infrastructure projects such as the Abidjan-Grand-Bassam Expressway, Abidjan urban rail system, Abidjan Olympic complex, regional wholesale markets, public parking lots in Abidjan, bridges and road networks, and the San-Pedro-Mont Nimba railway, etc.

There are many other projects in the mining sector, including the construction of a mining and steel industry for the Monogaga-Victory iron ore deposits, the exploitation of the Parc-Sou gold deposit, the construction of a gold and precious metals refining unit, the creation of a diamond stock market in Abidjan, and the exploitation of the Mont Klahoyo iron ore deposit and the Fêtékro gold deposit.

In the oil sector, a pipeline is being built and a 1.6 million-cubic-meter per annum oil depot in Bouaké and Yamoussoukro is being constructed. Operations of the Gestoci oil depots are being improved and secured, and the Béliér

offshore oil platform is being dismantled.

In the energy sector, investments are welcomed in the electrification program of 863 villages, the third phase of the Azito thermal power station, the setting up of a fourth thermal power station in Abidjan, and the interconnection of Côte d'Ivoire/Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire/Mali electricity grids.

Many foreign companies, among them 35 European entities, are active in various economic sectors in Côte d'Ivoire.

Therefore, I would like to express optimism in the future for my country. Indeed, the current political and security situation has allowed the organization in the country of several international events such as the G-77 meeting in Yamoussoukro in 2008, the meeting in Abidjan of the governors of the 24 Francophone countries of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 2009, as well as the General Assembly of the African Development Bank, which will be held in Abidjan in 2010.

I would also like to recall the full re-establishment of cooperation between Côte d'Ivoire and its multilateral partners, the IMF, the World Bank, the European Bank of Investment and the African Development Bank, which is a reward for the full commitment of the government to achieve growth with the objective of poverty alleviation.

In this perspective, the government is refocusing on the implementation of the strategy document for poverty alleviation, with several socioeconomic infrastructure projects ongoing or on the verge of being started such as the Abidjan-Yamoussoukro Expressway, the extension of the Abidjan Port Authority, a bridge network, the renovation of hospitals, canalization for water supply, etc.

Moreover, Côte d'Ivoire's economy is growing slowly but steadily. In 2008, the country registered economic growth of 2.3 compared to 1.6 percent in 2007. The prospects show an increase to 3.7 percent in 2009.

However, Côte d'Ivoire relies not only on its efforts but also on cooperation with friendly countries like Japan

to overcome the challenges of the global economic and financial crisis, and to achieve sustainable development.

That is the reason why I would like to invite the Japanese business sector to invest in Côte d'Ivoire and to boost commercial relationships by ensuring the access of Ivorian products, particularly the above-mentioned CNRA products, to the Japanese market, which will definitely strengthen the economic recovery of Côte d'Ivoire and Japan's economic presence in this part of Africa.

In this regard, the government is making efforts to create a more transparent and competitive business environment, which includes among others, the creation of commercial courts, the reform of the competition law, the acceleration of administrative procedures for the reimbursement of VAT credits to companies and tax incentive measures.

Furthermore, I would like to reiterate my deepest gratitude to Japan, which in the framework of the long-standing and fruitful cooperation between the two countries, has

always assisted the people of Côte d'Ivoire. Recently, the government of Japan provided not only humanitarian assistance to contribute to food security and to prevent infectious diseases in Côte d'Ivoire but also financial resources for the ongoing peace process.

Côte d'Ivoire also expects to benefit from Japan's commitments to African countries in the framework of the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), which were repeated during the Follow-up Ministerial Meeting held in Gaborone, Botswana, and also wishes to seize the opportunities offered by the Coalition of Africa Rice Development (CARD), for which Japan organized the Second General Meeting on June 3 and 4 in Tokyo.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to The Japan Times and all our partners, particularly the Ibis Hotel and Tokyo Kankan, which so generously sponsored the embassy on this memorable occasion, and to greet my fellow Ivorian citizens who live in Japan and benefit from the opportunities offered to them.

Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
on the 49th Anniversary of Their Independence Day


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