

# Yemen national day

## International aid needed for security, stability

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May 22 marks the 20th anniversary of the reunification of Yemen and the Proclamation of the Republic of Yemen. This was the first day that Yemen established a democratic multiparty system in its history. Yemen has been able to score numerous achievements for the country and people with the help and collaboration of the international community.



Yet, Yemen is still facing a lot of challenges while enjoying the positive aspects of its unity as a strengthening force to overcome it.

Since the al-Qaida attacks in 2000 on the USS Cole and in 2002 on the French tanker Limburg, Yemen, a country in the Arabian Peninsula living next to the oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council states, has tried its utmost to draw attention that it is the victim of international terrorism. Lately, there was the failed Christmas Day attack on a U.S. passenger jet, which brought Yemen again to spotlight, raising speculation of potential terrorist attacks in the U.S. or elsewhere. The last event is just a further reminder to the world to recall the challenges facing Yemen. Maybe events in the past were singular, but the challenges it now faces are unprecedented

in range and scope.

The United States has raised its development aid and military and intelligence cooperation with Yemen, in an effort to combat terrorism. Recognizing that Yemen faces greater problems and that more help from Yemen's friends is urgently needed, an international conference on Yemen was held earlier this year in London to help Yemen confront international terrorism and achieve its development goals. Without more help, the problems that Yemen faces will become a danger far beyond its borders. Any approaches and measures that would be taken must address the roots of nourishing terrorism from within the population, otherwise all efforts will be wasteful.

International terrorism, religious and tribal conflict, separatist sentiments, economic stagnation and transnational smuggling all confront Yemen's government with more than it can solely handle. All of these besides long borders and a heavily armed population make it very difficult for the government to achieve its goals.

Yemen is strategically located between Saudi Arabia and Somalia, where more than 3 million barrels of oil pass Yemen's coast every day through dangerous and troubled waters, where terrorists and Somali pirates have staged several successful maritime attacks in the last few years, which is a matter that disrupts international commerce and the flow of vital hydrocarbons.

Terrorists threaten Ye-

men's domestic security in the form of a resurgent al-Qaida organization; in addition to an armed insurgency in the north that left 350,000 internally displaced refugees and an increasingly active secessionist movement in the south.

Yemen's economy puts unbearable pressure on the government, which can scarcely provide basic services, being the poorest in the Arab world; with modest depleting oil reserves; no viable options for a sustainable post-oil economy; limited water resources; an impoverished, expanding population of 23 million; an unemployment rate of 35 percent; an annual per capita income of under \$900; and nearly half the population earns less than \$2 per day.

Although several of Yemen's problems have military ramifications, there are almost always non-military means of addressing them, and Japan and other donor countries are uniquely suited to do so.

Though the international community has focused on Yemen's deteriorating security and counterterrorism situations, long-term, positive results are hard to achieve.

Japan, together with other donors, may rank Yemen low on its list of priorities. Yet the situation threatens Japan and all other industrialized and maritime nations' interests more than they recognize, and they can do more about it than they might think. Yemen faces a staggering number of threats that endanger its domestic stability; the security of the bordering GCC; and the security of

sea lanes passing through its territorial seas in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and Red Sea.

The responsibility is mutual between Yemen and the international community. Sending troops to Yemen will only replicate another unsuccessful story of military intervention. Therefore, the effective solution is to assist Yemen to stand on its own.

Japanese aid, though small, are examples of assistance needed by Yemen. Yemen is looking forward to seeing significant developmental aid in the form of soft loans from Japan to build its infrastructure projects in the fields of energy, water desalination and transportation, including railway lines. Besides, Yemen is offering a great potentiality for direct investments in the oil, gas and minerals sectors, in exploration and production, upstream and downstream. Yemen LNG, a successful story of the biggest FDI of \$4.5 billion, started exporting in November 2009 and this project refutes the security concerns of reluctant Japanese oil companies.

Tourism and fisheries are other sectors where Japanese direct investment can play a significant role in diversifying Yemen's non-oil financial resources.

I commend here the spectacular relations Yemen is enjoying with Japan. I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to the government and people of Japan for the valuable support extended to Yemen, especially in the last few years.