

world/Mozambique national day

Achievements will help overcome challenges ahead

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AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF
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On June 25, Mozambicans all over the world are proudly celebrating the National Day of the Republic of Mozambique. On this auspicious occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Independence Day of Mozambique, I wish to convey my warm and heartfelt greetings to Their Majesties the Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and my best wishes for happiness and prosperity for the people and government of Japan. To the Mozambican community residing in Japan, I wish to extend our joyful greetings and sincere wishes of a good celebration during this occasion.

As we commemorate the 35th anniversary of our independence it is important that we take a moment to reflect on our recent past, on the most significant achievements accrued so far and the challenges that still lay ahead in the path to promote development.

Recent history

When the winds of change were blowing in the African continent in the '50s and early '60s, bringing about independence in many African nations, Mozambique remained colonized together with other Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. In order to liberate the country from Portuguese colonial rule, the Mozambicans united themselves around the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, FRELIMO, which victoriously conducted a liberation struggle that culminated with the proclamation of independence on June 25, 1975. The African Union and independent states that neighbored Mozambique and many friends in the international community around the world paid an important contribution to this process by extending to us their unlimited solidarity.

The period soon after independence was a very difficult one for a newly emancipated country. On the one side we had to redouble our efforts to address most of the problems inherited from colonialism, namely, poverty, unbalanced development throughout the country, high levels of illiteracy (which stood at more than 90 percent), poor human capital and inadequate health services, just to name a few. On the other side, we had to defend our country from the war of aggression from the then Rhodesia and the apartheid regimes, due to our support to the liberation struggle in Southern Africa. The war of destabilization was also part of the Cold War conflict due to the political and economic choices we made at independence. In 1992 the war of destabilization ended with the signing of the General Peace Agreement in Rome, creating the conditions for the country to concentrate on her economic and social development.

The legacy of war was very heavy and dramatic. Many citizens lost their lives and many citizens were thrown into absolute poverty, particularly in the rural areas. Most vital social and economic infrastructures were damaged or destroyed and the production network, especially agriculture, was almost halted. The public sector



President Armando Emilio Guebuza of the Republic of Mozambique

was suffering from the limited number of qualified staff.

Thus the process of national reconstruction and development required from the government clarity in the identification of the main interventions to be undertaken and vision in the adoption of strategies and priorities in order to stimulate development. It was in this context the government started, in 1995, the implementation of five-year economic and social development plans, a process that continues to date, to secure a balanced regional development by giving priorities to economically and socially underprivileged provinces, controlling inflation, promoting of domestic and foreign investment, developing infrastructures for economic growth, improving agricultural productivity in terms of food security, developing the industrial sector by utilizing national resources, increasing the contribution of fisheries and mining to export earnings and the expanding of education and health services. The government also adopted the Agenda 2025, which contains the main development goals for the next 25 years; the PARPA, a strategy designed to accelerate the fight against poverty; and the millennium goals strategy.

Achievements

We can proudly attest that since the attainment of independence Mozambique has made substantial progress in the political, economic and social spheres. The successes so far accumulated are a result of a clear leadership, adoption of the most appropriate strategies for development and the active involvement and participation of the citizens in the process.

During this period, one of the most important victories of the Mozambican people was the achievement of peace and a successful process of national reconciliation. Thanks to peace it was possible for the government and the people to concentrate on the hard task of national reconstruction and relaunching the foundations for development. The reconciliation allowed us to put aside all our differences and unite around the noblest cause of building a new nation that belongs to all Mozambicans without any kind of discrimination. The gains of peace and reconciliation are clearly visible everywhere in our society.

Today we live and work in a democratic country, characterized by political pluralism, the rule of law and social justice, where all citizens can exercise their freedom of expression and association. In this context the government is committed to guarantee the fundamental freedoms and rights to

all Mozambicans. New political parties have since emerged and have actively participated in the elections that have been held every five years since 1994. Civil society organizations have also found room to voice their opinions and contribute to the consolidation of the democratic process.

On the economic front, the implementation of sound macroeconomic policies coupled with measures aimed at improving the environment for conducting business, stimulated growth and flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country. Consequently, the gross domestic product (GDP) has grown from \$1.462 billion in 1994 to \$8.446 billion in 2007.

The average GDP annual growth rate has been 8 percent per year from 1996 to date. The GDP per capita jumped from \$88.10 in 1994 to \$396 in 2007.

Today, many private companies, both local and foreign, are taking advantage of the opportunities and the abundance of diverse natural resources. The participation of the private sector contributed significantly to the growth of exports from \$250 million in 1996 to \$2.4 billion in 2007.

Across the country the government has built more schools and has, for example, increased the enrollment levels of primary education to 98 percent. The populations in the rural areas have access to more and better health services. They do not have to walk very long distances to access potable water.

The provision of adequate infrastructures have been a permanent feature in the priorities of the government plans. As a



Traditional: The tufo dance is performed by groups of women moving just the top halves of their bodies.



Special economic zone: Nacala is a port on the northern coast of Mozambique that is a commercial and industrial center in Africa. EMBASSY OF MOZAMBIQUE

result of this policy, old roads have been rehabilitated and new ones have been constructed, thus facilitating the flow of trade and passengers throughout the country. The electricity grid has now reached almost all the districts in the country, fueling the emergence of small- and medium-size business in the rural areas and facilitating the access to new technologies like the Internet and mobile telecommunications.

Citizens have also benefited from the reforms introduced by the government in order to reinforce governance. Food security and agricultural productivity has improved thanks to a green revolution program that is currently under implementation. The introduction of the Local Area Development Fund, through which each of the 128 districts receive the equivalent of \$300,000 for projects, has also contributed to change the situation in rural areas by creating

new business, increasing agricultural production and creating new jobs.

It is important to note that the achievements were possible thanks to the multifaceted support and assistance Mozambique received from the international cooperating partners, namely governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Here I would like to take this opportunity to express on behalf of the government our profound satisfaction for the good relations of friendship and cooperation that we enjoy with Japan. We have been partners since the day we became independent and we have worked closely together in both good and difficult times. The President of Mozambique H.E. Armando Emilio Guebuza has visited Japan twice since 2007 and many ministerial delegations have also come to this country with the objective of consolidating our bilateral relations.

Our cooperation has also grown in the context of TICAD IV with the launch in April 2010 of the triangular cooperation among Mozambique, Brazil and Japan, through which the tropical savanna along the Nacala Corridor in northern Mozambique will be transformed into highly productive agricultural zones. Our economic relations have also been boosted by the visit in January and February this year of a public-private business visit to Mozambique, since it attests to the growing interest of the Japanese private sector to do business with Mo-

zambique.

The future

Notwithstanding the positive picture we were able to witness during the 35 years of Mozambican independence, we are still far from achieving our main goal which is the eradication of poverty and the improvement of the standard of living of Mozambicans — 54 percent of our population still lives under the poverty line. So the government, under the leadership of President Guebuza will continue to adopt measures designed to eradicate poverty. In the next five years the government will focus on the consolidation of national unity, peace and democracy; the fight against poverty and the promotion of a culture of work; good governance, decentralization, accountability and anticorruption; reinforcement of national sovereignty and international cooperation.

In conclusion, let me say that I feel proud to belong to a country with a hardworking people. Encouraged by the progress made so far, I have no doubt that we will be able to overcome the challenges that still lay ahead. We also hope to continue to count on the assistance of the Japanese government and people in our efforts to build a better society for all Mozambicans.

Lastly, I would like to conclude by thanking The Japan Times for granting me the opportunity to address and greet your esteemed readers on this occasion.

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