

Cote d'Ivoire independence day

Nation maintains momentum of economic recovery on 50th anniversary

Boa Liliane Marie Laure
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF COTE
D'IVOIRE TO JAPAN

On the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Cote d'Ivoire's Independence Day, on behalf of President Laurent Gbagbo, the government and the people of Cote d'Ivoire, I extend our greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial Family, Prime Minister Naoto Kan, the government and the people of Japan.

This year's commemoration should be an excellent occasion to look toward the future with an eye back to the past.

Cote d'Ivoire gained its independence on Aug. 7, 1960, under

the leadership of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny.

Because of its sound achievements in the field of economic development, Cote d'Ivoire has been dubbed the "Ivorian Miracle."

Agriculture has expanded very well, placing the country as the first cocoa producer and as the second coffee producer in the world. These two products have been for a while the main resource-supplying segment of the economy.

In order to boost the economy, the former government had organized an Invest in Cote d'Ivoire Tour for many African, European and Asian countries. The objective was to bring our partners to come into trading with Cote d'Ivoire. By that time the growth rate neared the double digits.

Surprisingly, in December 1999 the "African Elephant" as



President Laurent Gbagbo

Cote d'Ivoire was dubbed, was overthrown, as a result of a military coup. One year later, general elections were organized.

But another political crisis that struck the country in September 2002 put an end to the development program initiated by the new elected president.

Under the leadership of President Gbagbo and the Ouagadougou Political Agreement signed in March 2007, Cote d'Ivoire is recovering steadily. The overall change that is taking place has been possible due to his commitment to achieve poverty alleviation and human security.

Agriculture is still booming with the development of new cocoa, cotton and rubber plantations, providing a little more than 70 percent of the country's export revenue.

At the same time the government is restoring and refurbishing hotels and hospitals and extending its road network.

The strategic location of the country, its good economic infrastructure and its transparent and competitive business environment make it a secure place to invest. So I invite the Japanese private sector and

the economic operators to invest in Cote d'Ivoire. There are many opportunities in diverse sectors from infrastructure building within the framework of the relocation of the political capital city to Yamoussoukro, to the mining and energy sectors.

I would like to thank the government of Japan, whose embassy in Abidjan has undertaken to improve the environment by restoring the zoological park in the Banco Forest, after it refurbished the National Library.

Our thanks to Japan, who is taking a great part in the training of our youth by granting scholarships to students to study in Japanese universities, thus creating a network of well-trained human resources.

Amid the political turmoil, President Gbagbo is struggling

to push forward the universal mutual insurance program that aims to provide health care coverage to every household, especially to the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population.

Despite the difficult financial and economic environment in 2009, Cote d'Ivoire has been able to maintain the momentum of recovery with a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 3.8 percent. The general level of prices has been contained, with an inflation rate that stood at 1 percent. These figures have been set by relevant economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This positive evaluation will enable my country to look forward to the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) Completion Point under the initiative for

debt cancellation at the end of this year.

This is another reason of satisfaction as President Gbagbo has decided since he came to power to derive the necessary public funds for the operating budget from the country's own resources.

Cote d'Ivoire has regained confidence from its private and multilateral partners; the annual meetings of the African Development Bank in Abidjan, held last May, is a

testimony of it.

It is our hope that the presidential election that is set for soon after the voters list is completed and agreed upon by all parties will enable Cote d'Ivoire to get its economy on track and enhance its current achievements.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the readers of The Japan Times and wish a happy national day to all Ivorians living in Japan.

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
on the 50th Anniversary of Their Independence



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