

Botswana independence day

Growing cooperation in many sectors marks strong ties

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AMBASSADOR OF BOTSWANA

On this significant day, Sept. 30, the Republic of Botswana marks the 45th anniversary of independence from Britain in 1966. I wish to express my most sincere greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and to the government and people of Japan.



As we celebrate this important day, we take stock of the cordial bilateral relations that exist between Botswana and Japan. We also remember the Great East Japan Earthquake and take solace in the strength, unparalleled resilience and dignity of the people of Japan during the catastrophic times that ensued, and once again express our support and commiserations.

Our relations with Japan, dating back to 1966, have witnessed growing cooperation in the political, economic and social sectors. Last October, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana Seretse Khama Ian Khama visited Japan to further

enhance and strengthen our bilateral relations.

Botswana is grateful for cooperation with Japan pursued under the auspices of the Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD). In May, Japan announced during the TICAD IV Ministerial Follow-up Meeting held in Dakar, Senegal, its intention to honor commitments to finance infrastructural development projects in Africa, notwithstanding her own national challenges in the aftermath of the March 11 earthquake. This unwavering commitment to Africa's economic development agenda is highly commendable.

As a beneficiary of the TICAD IV Process, Botswana deeply appreciates Japan's continued support for high-impact projects such as the Kazungula Bridge, a crucial crossing point for goods and people in the southern, central and eastern African regions. The Kazungula project holds the promise of positively impacting other sectors of the regional economy, such as trade, investment and tourism. It will also further alleviate congestion and encourage regional integration along the north-south road corridor.

This year, Japan started the



Nature: Located in southern Africa, Botswana has diverse wildlife habitats, such as the Okavango Delta — the world's largest inland delta — and Chobe National Park (above). The park has the world's largest concentration of African elephants. EMBASSY OF BOTSWANA

implementation of the renewable energy projects through the construction of the 1 megawatt photovoltaic power plant in Botswana. The project will augment Botswana's efforts toward energy self-sufficiency in the long run. The project is in keeping with

Japan's initiatives in low carbon and green projects.

We are also thankful to the Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) for the establishment of Botswana Educational Television, which was officially launched on June 13. The Educational Television

in Botswana will have a huge impact in the improvement of the quality of education, particularly in our rural population.

As the second biggest contributor to gross domestic product (GDP) in Botswana, the tourism sector offers the best

hope in the diversification of our economy from mineral resources (diamond, copper and nickel). Botswana boasts some of the world's premier and pristine tourism attractions, such as, the Okavango Delta, Chobe National Park, Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Tuli Block, Tsodilo Hills and Makgadikgadi Pans, to name a few. All these attractions offer truly unique African experiences.

As a region endowed with transnational tourism resources, southern Africa offers abundant tourism — related investment opportunities in the form of transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs). These TFCAs, the first initiatives of their kind in the world, have led to the effective elimination of international boundaries, to allow the re-establishment of ancient migratory routes of wildlife and holistic management of fragile ecosystems and habitats. This, therefore, calls for significant infrastructure investment in the form of lodges to facilitate tourism in these unique attractions.

On this day, as we reflect on the journey we have traveled, we do not forget the friends who have supported us since independence and helped Botswana become the country it is today. Japan is indeed a true friend, a friend who has stayed with us during good and difficult times.

We also cherish the kindness and hospitality shown to us by the people of Japan and look

forward to welcoming an increasing number of Japanese to Botswana. "Pula!"

Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Botswana
on the 45th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day



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