

Mauritania national day

Building toward a strong economy, a stable, unfaltering democracy

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REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA

First, allow me to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt and respectful wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the distinguished Imperial family. I would also like on behalf of the Mauritanian government and people to express my sincere congratulations to the Japanese government and people for the steady recovery that has been witnessed in the areas severely affected by the devastating earthquake of March 11, 2011.

I further wish to convey my sincere gratitude to the editors of The Japan Times for kindly giving me the opportunity to address their readers.

Today, Mauritania, under the wise leadership of H.E. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, president of the republic, is witnessing huge progress in infrastructure realization: Hundreds of kilometers of paved roads have been built around the country in a short period; ports are being expanded (the port of Nouadhibou); wind, solar and gas power plants, expected to solve the problem of power shortages, are being constructed in our two biggest cities: Nouakchott and Nouadhibou; water plants are being built to bring drinkable water to most cities; and the Internet debit has been described as one of the best performing on a re-

gional scale. New hospitals and schools have been built around the country, and particularly in areas where thousands of low-income households have been newly relocated.

The achievement of such infrastructure worked to boost our economic growth thus leaving a huge positive impact in Mauritanian living standards through universal access to basic services, creation of jobs, and effective programs to fight disparities and poverty, thus contributing to preserve the social peace and political stability that are pivotal to a steady democracy.

The president's devotion to good governance, and his relentless fight against the chaos and nepotism that has long been affecting the efficiency of our administration, adding to his firm determination to fight terrorism, human and drug trafficking, has contributed to the achievement of better results in the management of our natural resources and efficient control over our borders.

Given its highly strategic geographical position at the crossroads of North and sub-Saharan Africa, Mauritania offers expanding investment opportunities in fisheries, oil and gas sectors but also in mining, with the iron ore potential of the Taoudeni Basin adding to the recent huge discoveries in gold reserves that would soon lift Mauritania to the rank of Africa's top gold producer.

The recent decision to create a free zone in Nouadhibou is a new step to boost many investment opportunities in this region.

On the political level, the last year of successful political dialogue between the presidential



World Heritage: The Chinguetti Mosque is a World Heritage site located in the oasis city of Chinguetti. The ancient center of worship dates back to the 13th or 14th century. MAURITANIA EMBASSY

majority and opposition parties that concluded in the signing of a very comprehensive political agreement has helped to strengthen trust among national political stakeholders, and contributed tremendously to the reinforcement of the country's democratic experience.

The inclusive general and local elections that took place Nov. 23 were transparent and showed the strong commitment of the government to pursue political reforms founded on a real democratic system.

The creation of the institution to fight and eradicate all forms of the consequences of slavery is also a tremendous challenge to this end.

On an international and regional level, Mauritanian diplomacy in the past four years has been very active. The country has further devoted itself effectively to contribute to the tremendous efforts of the interna-

tional community to help find peaceful solutions to regional crises.

As a very active member of many regional organizations (UMA, OMVS, Grande Muraille Verte, Cilss etc.), Mauritania is devoted to regional and continental integration.

In the tourism sector, Mauritania is the host of four cities — Chinguetti, Ouadane, Oualata and Tichitt — registered as UNESCO World Heritage sites, and the Banc d'Arguin National Park, another registered site, is classified as Africa's largest protected maritime zone.

Mauritania stands resolutely committed to economic liberalism, the focus on the realization of efficient infrastructure is a clear indicator of its determination to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Mauritania's bid to achieve this goal is stimulated by the generous assistance of friendly na-

tions like Japan, which remains one of the main contributors to public development aid in Mauritania. In this regard, the Mauritanian government and people acknowledge greatly the positive impacts of Japanese official development assistance (ODA) to our vital sectors such as infrastructure, food security, environmental protection, fisheries, health, extension of ports, etc.

The creation, three years ago, of a Japanese-Mauritanian Friendship Association has greatly contributed to further enhance the relationship between our two peoples.

Japan continues to play a key role in Mauritanian development through many financial projects:

- Extension of fishing port in Nouadhibou
- Launching many projects in energy and water sectors
- Important contribution for assistance to Malian refugees along our borders to the east
- Food security (yearly), etc.

Mauritania participated very actively in TICAD V, which took place in Yokohama last June, with important contributions from the minister of foreign affairs and cooperation and the



H.E. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, president of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

minister of economic affairs and development. The outcome of TICAD V was very significant and will contribute to the development of Mauritania.

My country will also take part in the next Japan-Arab Economic Forum, planned for December in Tokyo.

I dare to be certain that Mauritania can count on Japan's continued support and friendship as we continue our nation-building efforts.



Resources: The mining industry offers some of the biggest investment opportunities in Mauritania. MAURITANIA EMBASSY

Congratulations
to the People of
the Islamic Republic of Mauritania
on the 53rd Anniversary
of Their Independence

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