

## Côte d'Ivoire Independence Day

## Moving toward being an emerging country by 2020

Jérôme Klôh Weya  
AMBASSADOR OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE



As Côte d'Ivoire celebrates the 56th anniversary of its independence, The Japan Times recently had an opportunity to speak with Ambassador Jérôme Klôh Weya.

#### Do you have any message for our readers on your country's independence anniversary?

First of all, allow me, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, H.E. Alassane Ouattara, the government, the people of Côte d'Ivoire and myself, to extend my respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as the Imperial family and offer them my fervent wishes of health and continued happiness. I also express my sincere greetings to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and the friendly people of Japan.

#### Politics

##### What is the sociopolitical situation in Côte d'Ivoire?

The sociopolitical situation in Côte d'Ivoire is stable. The insecurity index, which was estimated at 1.11 in December, is similar to what prevails in all peaceful countries in the world. The 2010 events are far behind and the Ivorian people are now looking toward the future and the government is working to achieve the economic emergence of the country by 2020.

##### President Ouattara won a second five-year term in October. What do you expect from the parliamentary elections scheduled for later this year?

The election of President Ouattara, winning with 83.66 percent of the votes, for a second term, sent out a strong signal to the international

community that Côte d'Ivoire is back among democratic countries. In this regard, the upcoming elections and the constitutional referendum prior to them should confirm this return. So we expect that these consultations will take place in a peaceful climate to confirm that political stability has returned permanently.

##### Economy

#### How is the socioeconomic situation in the country?

The economic situation in Côte d'Ivoire is excellent. I would like to share the World Bank's views on it: "For four years, Côte d'Ivoire has been experiencing impressive economic success, illustrated by rapid GDP growth that has reduced poverty, and evoking the evolution of macroeconomic data."

Our GDP growth reached 8.4 percent in 2015 and we expect 8.5 percent this year. However, some efforts are still needed to improve the social conditions of the population in relation to this strong economic growth and the government is working on it.

##### What are some of the strong points of Côte d'Ivoire's economy?

The geographical position of Côte d'Ivoire in Africa is a major strength of the country. Côte d'Ivoire is a coastal country and in sub-Saharan Africa, the Port of Abidjan is the second-largest port after Durban in South Africa. In southwestern Côte d'Ivoire, we have the Port of San-Pedro, the second-largest port in the country and the first export point of Ivorian cocoa. Another strong point is the economic leadership of the country in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), as Côte d'Ivoire represents 32 percent of WAEMU's GDP.

##### Are there moves to diversify the economy, which has long relied on agriculture, especially coffee, cocoa beans and palm oil, into other



President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire H.E. Alassane Ouattara

##### areas? If so, what areas?

Allow me to point out that Côte d'Ivoire is the world's top cocoa and cashew producer. Côte d'Ivoire authorities have the ambition to process 50 percent of our cocoa and 100 percent of the production of cashews in Côte d'Ivoire by 2020. This ambition is in line with one of the themes of the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), which is promoting structural economic transformation through economic diversification and industrialization.

Otherwise, the Ivorian government is diversifying the Ivorian economy by promoting other sectors such as mining and services, including ICT.

##### Has the Ivorian government set any major economic goals?

The Ivorian government has the ambition to make

Côte d'Ivoire an emerging country by 2020. In this context, the government has developed the National Development Plan (NDP) for the 2016-2020 period that aims to consolidate the way to the economic emergence and the industrialization of Côte d'Ivoire. The NDP is an investment program of about 30,000 billion CFA francs, or about ¥6 trillion for 2016-2020.

##### What are some of the advantages of Côte d'Ivoire for foreign companies considering investing in the country?

The advantages are many, but I want to cite six. First, Côte d'Ivoire is a country in full economic and social development, the business opportunities are growing and opportunities are close at hand.

Next, Côte d'Ivoire is a multicultural country, with more than 60 ethnic groups, and



Aerial view of Abidjan, one of the most modern cities in West Africa EMBASSY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

there are communities from European, Asian, American and African countries.

Third, Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, is one of the largest metropolises and one of the most modern cities in West Africa. Additionally, with its tropical climate, people enjoy ideal temperatures throughout the year.

We also have very good international schools based on the French and American systems.

Finally, as our national anthem professes; we are a country of hospitality.

##### Foreign Relations

#### How are Côte d'Ivoire's foreign relations?

As a disciple of the former President of the Republic, H.E. Felix Houphouët-Boigny, the father of the nation, the President Ouattara applies the principle, "Côte d'Ivoire is friend of all countries and

enemy of no one." This principle that was implemented by the father of the Ivorian nation is the foundation of the foreign policy of Côte d'Ivoire.

However, Côte d'Ivoire maintains special relations with some friendly countries, including Japan. Côte d'Ivoire is proud of the visit made by the Japanese prime minister to Abidjan in January 2014, the first by a Japanese Prime Minister to a French-speaking African country.

##### What are some of the roles that Côte d'Ivoire can play in the African international community?

Côte d'Ivoire, through President Ouattara, already plays the role of promoter of political stability and inclusive economic growth. During his two terms, as chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is usually limited to one, he strongly worked for

political stability in Mali during the military coup in 2011 and in Guinea Bissau in 2012.

##### What do you expect to come out of TICAD VI, which is scheduled to take place in Africa for the first time this year?

I am hopeful for further industrialization as Côte d'Ivoire produces many agricultural and mining raw materials and the country needs the technology to process them. In this regard, Japanese companies are invited to take part in various ongoing infrastructure projects under the NDP. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government of Japan in advance for the Côte d'Ivoire-Japan Friendship Flyover in Abidjan and we are patiently waiting its realization.

##### Bilateral relationship

#### How is the relationship between Côte d'Ivoire and Japan?

As I said, bilateral relations between Côte d'Ivoire and Japan are excellent. There is a convergence of views between our two countries on all political issues. But we have to strengthen our trade relations so as to achieve the level of excellence of our political and diplomatic relationships.

##### Can you introduce some of the projects Côte d'Ivoire and Japan have conducted in the past for the improvement of your country?

I would like to cite, among others, the Project for Urban Planning Development Plan of 'Great Abidjan'; the Digital Topographic Mapping Project for Urban Development; the project for the promotion of social cohesion in Abidjan; and the project to build the Côte d'Ivoire-Japan Friendship Flyover in Abidjan. Additionally, there is the project

to build a highway ring road as part of the Urban Planning Development Plan of Abidjan; and the project to build a cereal terminal in the Port of Abidjan.

##### In which areas do you expect Japan, both at the government and the private-sector level, to further contribute to the development of Côte d'Ivoire?

I would like to thank the government of Japan for funding several projects in Côte d'Ivoire through the Japanese International Cooperation Agency. Regarding the private sector, I would like to invite Japanese businesspeople to be more involved in the development of Côte d'Ivoire, which is an open economy for all investors. For the period from 2016 to 2020, we expect Japanese government and private sector investment in our NDP.

##### What do you see as the future of the bilateral relationship with Japan?

For the future, I hope that our relations are strengthened even more. Côte d'Ivoire is a privileged partner for Japan in West Africa. We have to work to increase Japanese private investment in our country. In this regard, the embassy is available to Japanese businesspeople to provide any further information.

##### Do you have any final words for our readers?

I would like to conclude by thanking your newspaper for giving me the opportunity to make Côte d'Ivoire better known to its readers and expressing my sincere thanks to Ajinomoto Co., Mitsubishi Corp., Marubeni Corp., and NEC Corp. for their continuous support to the embassy and their generosity in sponsoring this message.



Artist's rendering of the Côte d'Ivoire-Japan Friendship Flyover in Abidjan EMBASSY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE



The Port of Abidjan is one of Africa's busiest. EMBASSY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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to the People of  
the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire  
on the 56th Anniversary of  
Their Independence Day

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