

Sudan National Day

Envisioning an era of political reconciliation and economic stability

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AMBASSADOR OF SUDAN

Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu (Happy New Year).

I have the honor to extend my warmest felicitations to the staff and readers of The Japan Times, wishing them a happy and prosperous new year.

For over a year now, I have been blessed with the extraordinary opportunity of serving my country in the great country of Japan. In addition to my usual diplomatic functions and duties, I enjoy the charming experience of developing people-to-people ties in a friendly, encouraging and receptive atmosphere that embraces a series of social, cultural and academic activities that overwhelmingly dominate the daily life of Japanese and res-



ident diplomats.

Along with that gratification, I have the unique privilege of constantly learning from what has transpired and been produced by the deeply rooted civilization of Japan that tremendously influenced the contemporary social patterns of behavior, ranging from the simple forms of greeting to the impressive spirit of collectivity, high sense of responsibility, values of respect and punctuality.

I would like to take the opportunity to express my profound, sincere and respectful greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, as well as the government and friendly people of Japan. I would like also to congratulate all members of the Sudanese community in Japan on the auspicious occasion of the National Day of Sudan and the new year. This small, but rather active community deserves credit as its members represent an embassy of their

own.

On Jan. 1, 1956, the Sudanese people crowned their painful sacrifice and courageous struggle with independence. That date continues to carry a sense of pride as it also denotes a collective resolve toward upholding a unified national identity. That day — and every day — our people renew their commitment and determination to continue building a modern nation based on political equality, economic prosperity and sociocultural integration.

Sudan lies in the heart of Africa — literally pumping blood and supplying oxygen to different parts of the African body. Sudan is also known to be the cradle of civilization. This historical and geopolitical destiny enabled Sudan to play a pivotal role of becoming the melting pot for the rich and diversified ethnic and cultural fabric of the continent. Sudan was the first country to gain independence in sub-Saharan Africa, a factual reality that is reflected in the assistance of national liberation movements, and contributed to the entire emancipation of the continent.

As every cloud has a silver lining, the year 2017 carries a silver lining for Sudanese people. At the political level, a national dialogue was initiated two years ago with the participation of a wide spectrum of political parties, armed movements and renowned national figures from all walks of life.

The fundamental premise of the initiative is to engage in a comprehensive dialogue that does not exclude anyone, pro-



Sudan's capital of Khartoum EMBASSY OF SUDAN

viding a forum for deliberating in an open and all-inclusive manner the fundamental concerns of the population.

The final national document produced at the end of the national dialogue conference expressed the conviction that the problems of Sudan can only be resolved through dialogue and recalled the unprecedented acceptance of all the forces and their response to that purposeful initiative. The document contained recommendations on issues of identity, peace and unity, fundamental freedoms and rights, the economy and foreign relations. The document was unanimously adopted on Oct. 10.

Economically, Sudan has miraculously navigated through the troubled waters of economic hardships. Those hardships can be partially attributed to the secession of South Sudan, as well as the economic sanctions imposed

on Sudan since 1997.

Despite those harsh realities, the economy of Sudan is still reasonably sound and resilient. According to the African Development Bank (ADB), Sudan's economic growth rose to above 5 percent in 2015 and is expected to increase further to more than 6 percent in 2016 and 2017, mainly driven by agriculture and extractive industries supported by improved mac-

roeconomic policies. ADB's 2016 African Economic Outlook indicates a positive outcome of the national dialogue that is hoped to lead to the end of civil war and improvement of economic stability.

Regarding bilateral relations, the cooperation between Japan and Sudan is noticeably progressing. The two countries are maintaining an excellent level of coordination at different international forums. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Japan graciously accepted to chair the working party on the accession of Sudan to the World Trade Organization.

High-level meetings are continuing as well, with the latest being the meeting of foreign affairs ministers on the sidelines of the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) held in Nairobi in August. During that meeting, Sudan's foreign minister conveyed his appreciation for Japan's efforts to make TICAD a success and voiced his gratitude for Japan's support of Sudan in past years, while Foreign Minister Fumio

Kishida noted the important role played by Sudan in regional stability.

In the context of bilateral cooperation, it is important to highlight the role of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, which continues to spearhead the efforts of Japanese assistance to Sudan through projects and activities that focus on three priority areas. These areas cover the consolidation of peace through the improved fulfillment of basic human needs; promoting the establishment

of development models and improvement of capabilities of government organizations in the fields of health, water sanitation and vocational training; and diversification of industry.

In closing, I would like to express my hope and confidence that the bilateral relations between Japan and Sudan will be further enhanced in consonance with the logical equation of blending Japanese technology with the untapped rich resources of Sudan.



Pyramids in northern Sudan EMBASSY OF SUDAN

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Republic of the Sudan
on the Occasion
of
Their National Day



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