

Economic diversity through change across a wide variety of sectors

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On the 57th Anniversary of Independence of the Gabonese Republic, I convey my respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family,

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and the friendly people of Japan. On this occasion, I would like to introduce my country's current strategic policy as it may attract Japanese private players interested in expansion in our region.

Though an oil-producing country, Gabon is making efforts to stimulate its economy in other areas to less depend on the oil sector, as it is subject to price volatility. To attract the maximum number of foreign — including Japanese — investors, the Gabonese government implemented in June, a three-year Economic Recovery Plan (ERP),

which aims at strengthening several industries, particularly the wood, agriculture, fishery, mining, hydrocarbons, building, digital and tourism sectors. This is a part of the global Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan (EGSP), which was implemented in 2010.

Wood and timber

The Gabonese timber industry harvests across 14 million hectares of forest and employs more than 12,000 people. The objective in the wood sector for the EGSP is to create more value with fewer resources so as to curb deforestation, while increasing the capacity for wealth and job creation. Installation of new investors and consolidation of existing operators' ecosystems are this sector's priority.

An active campaign for the promotion and facilitation of investments will be undertaken to attract major international operators in the privileged zones of Booue, Nkok and Port-Gentil.

Agriculture

In agriculture sector, the 2017-19 ERP aims to cut 50 percent of food imports, which were more than 350 billion CFA



President and Head of State of the Gabonese Republic Ali Bongo Ondimba

franc in 2016. Promotional programs and competitiveness plans on agriculture are expected to boost private investments and create millions of agricultural jobs.

Fisheries

With an 850-km seacoast, 20,000 sq. km of natural basins — and their diversified biomass — Gabon has great potential in fishery resources and the aquaculture environment, while also seeking self-sufficiency in fisheries. Additionally, the government intends to

encourage investment in this area to build strength in fishery-related activity clusters such as industrial refrigeration, processing, fishmeal production, hatcheries and others.

Mining

The EGSP also has a new ambition to make the mining sector a main pillar of the Gabonese economy. As Gabonese soil is rich in minerals (manganese, iron, gold, phosphate, potassium, uranium, niobium, tantalum and rare earths), the country aims to diversify mineral exports where manganese is currently dominant and increase added value by local transformation.

Hydrocarbons

Although Gabon has chosen to diversify its economy, hydrocarbons shall continue expanding and favoring the inflow of foreign investors, especially in gas projects and petroleum-based products.

Construction

Gabon is not only one of the most urbanized countries in Africa, but also the world. Despite its high urbanization rate of 85 percent, a deficit of urban planning and a land-

related business environment did not allow construction industry to fully develop. While there has always been solvent demand from households and institutional operators, the state is also in need. Public-private partnerships will be promoted in this area to involve more private stakeholders.

Digital and electronics

The EGSP aims to turn the country into a center of excellence through strong value-added services and as a pioneer of the digital revolution by 2025. Gabon already has access to the undersea ACE (African Coast to Europe) cable and has installed terrestrial fiber optics. This support to blooming digital services will provide job opportunities to thousands of young Gabonese in the coming years so that the e-economy could serve as an accelerator to other sectors.

Tourism

Since 2002, under the voluntary policy for biodiversity preservation, Gabon's nature has been especially highlighted by its 13 national parks, among which Lope is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. With the rise of ecotourism and green

tourism, these preservation areas serve as important tourist attractions.

Good relations with Japan

Aside from business fields, bilateral relations between Japan and Gabon remain excellent. As has always been the case, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is taking part in several public projects in Gabon, notably in the fisheries, forest resource management, health and ecotourism areas.

JICA also offers professional, capacity-building training in a number of fields and is constantly sending volunteers of all ages for experience exchanges. Under the JICA's initiative for leader education, young Gabonese officials with various specialties, take various classes to boost their abilities before returning to their regular work.

All of this means that Gabon's economy is shifting, becoming more and more globally open — and global includes Japan. Further to the official partnership that is already excellent, I would like to reiterate the interest of the Gabonese Republic to further develop and consolidate the existing cordial relations with the Japanese business sphere in a win-win spirit.



President Ali Bongo Ondimba cuts the ribbon at the opening of a Nouvelle Gabon Mining manganese plant in Biniomi on May 8.

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

Congratulations

to the People of
the Gabonese Republic
on the Occasion of
the 57th Anniversary of
Their Independence

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