

Côte d'Ivoire Independence Day Special

Hand in hand for a mutually beneficial partnership

JÉRÔME KLÓH WEYA
AMBASSADOR OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE



On the occasion of the celebration of the 58th anniversary of Côte d'Ivoire's Independence Day, on behalf of President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire Alassane Ouattara, the government and people of

Côte d'Ivoire and on my own behalf, I would like 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 continual happiness.

I also convey my greetings to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and friendly people of Japan.

In addition, I'd also like to reiterate the condolences and deep compassion of the Ivorian government and people of Côte d'Ivoire to the government and people of Japan, as well as the victims of the heavy rainfall and floods that hit western Japan.

My remarks will focus on political and diplomatic relations in addition to economic and cultural relations.

Political and diplomatic ties

Côte d'Ivoire and Japan have maintained political and diplomatic relations for years. These relations have been characterized on the international level by a convergence of views between the two countries.

In this respect, as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Côte d'Ivoire insists on being proactive in the search for solutions to global issues.

On a bilateral basis, Côte d'Ivoire and Japan maintain a close relationship with reciprocal visits by several ministers of the two countries.

The highlight of our cooperation is Abe's historic visit to Côte d'Ivoire in January 2014;

the first time a Japanese prime minister visited a French-speaking West African country.

This visit sparked enthusiasm in both Côte d'Ivoire and the 14 other countries in the Economic Community of West African States whose heads of state and government, without exception, made the trip to meet Abe.

Through this visit to Côte d'Ivoire, Abe has paved the way for Japanese businesspeople and companies who have shown interest in Côte d'Ivoire, therefore becoming the gateway for Japanese companies in West Africa.

As for Ouattara, he attended the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in 2013 in Yokohama and TICAD VI in 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya. The president took those opportunities to meet with Abe to reinforce the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Economic relations

With an average annual growth rate of 9 percent for several years, Côte d'Ivoire has become an attractive country. This attractiveness results from the country's great potential in agriculture, mining and governance.

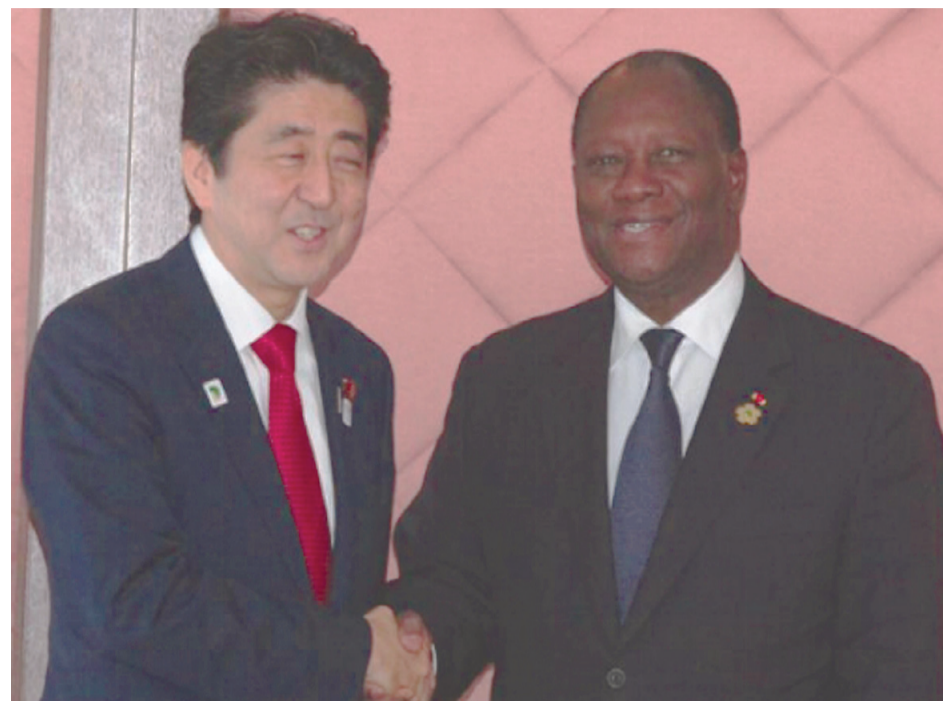
As such, the philosophy of Ouattara, the former director general of the International Monetary Fund, is that the development of African countries cannot be effective without the private sector that acts as the engine for development.

Under this policy, Côte d'Ivoire has focused on developing a liberal economy that is open to private sectors and foreign investors.

In order to attract foreign investors, the government has drawn up investment incentive codes allowing them to receive the benefits of their investments in their countries without hindrance.

These favorable conditions for investment and the business environment have attracted many foreign companies, including Japanese companies to Côte d'Ivoire.

In fact, 10 Japanese companies have set up offices in Abidjan, making Côte d'Ivoire the first French-speaking country in sub-Saharan



President of Côte d'Ivoire Alassane Ouattara and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shake hands during their meeting in May 2013 during the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Yokohama. EMBASSY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Africa to host this many Japanese companies.

In this regard, I would like to thank those Japanese companies for their contribution to Côte d'Ivoire's economy. I also encourage Japanese investors in particular and Japanese people in general to go beyond their usual discretion to show Ivorian people Japan's presence in Côte d'Ivoire. Indeed, the government of Japan and Japanese companies contribute to many sectors toward Côte d'Ivoire's development; unfortunately, many Ivorians are not aware of Japan's contribution. For example, Toyota Tsusho Corp. bought French company CFAO SA, and introduced its supermarket Carrefour to the country, but most Ivorian consumers do not know that Carrefour is now a Japanese supermarket. Another example is that Toyota Tsusho, in cooperation with Dutch company Heineken NV,

produces Ivoire (meaning "ivory"), the most-consumed beer in Côte d'Ivoire. However, Ivorian people oftentimes do not know that this beer is produced by a Japanese company.

As part of improving the business climate, the government has created a committee of consultation in the public and private sectors for dialogue between the two partners. The government has also created a ministry that is primarily in charge of private investment.

The private sector aims to contribute to transforming the economy through industrialization via a long-term process involving raw materials and agricultural products in Côte d'Ivoire. The government's ambition is to achieve processing 50 percent of cocoa and 50 percent of cashew nuts produced in Côte d'Ivoire by 2020. It is also worth noting that Côte d'Ivoire is the No. 1 producer of cocoa

and cashew nuts in the world.

Based on this, Côte d'Ivoire is in line with one of the key pillars of TICAD VI, "Promoting Structural Economic Transformation through Economic Diversification and Industrialization," that took place in 2016 on Aug. 27 and 28. TICAD VII, scheduled to take place in Yokohama next year from Aug. 28 to 30, will be an opportunity to engage more deeply with this pillar toward inclusive growth.

In addition to the private sector, Japan supports Côte d'Ivoire through official development assistance and technical assistance. In this regard, the Japan International Cooperation Agency's support (grants, loans and technical assistance) has increased significantly from ¥14.59 billion in 2016 to ¥21.03 billion in 2017.

The result of this cooperation was the Japanese government's donation of ¥5.038 billion for the construction of an interchange in Abidjan called the Japan-Côte d'Ivoire Friendship Interchange. The construction of this work was decided on the occasion of Abe's visit to Côte d'Ivoire. The economic cooperation has also resulted in the construction of a fishing port in Sassandra, in southwestern Côte d'Ivoire, that cost around ¥4.2 billion.

The financial support of Japan is also reflected in the granting of loans at preferential rates for the financing of infrastructure projects such as the grain terminal at the Port of Abidjan and the construction of three interchanges on Boulevard François Mitterrand in Abidjan.

Scientific and cultural bonds

To perfect the partnership between Côte



Kassou-Tri, a group of Ivorian musicians, is scheduled to tour Japan from Oct. 18 to Nov. 13, 2018. MIN-ON CONCERT ASSOCIATION

d'Ivoire and Japan, the cultural, social and training exchanges should be highlighted. Training is offered every year in various sectors to young Ivorian people in the context of a short or long stay in Japan, including scholarships following the framework of the African Business Education Initiative for Youth.

In addition to this support from Japanese authorities, many Japanese private entities are working and acting to strengthen the ties between Côte d'Ivoire and Japan. One example is Sophia University's exchange training program with the University of Cocody in Abidjan through the Center for Research and Action for Peace. These opportunities also include non-governmental organizations such as Ashinaga for granting scholarships, the city of Gifu for various donations to young students in Côte d'Ivoire and the willingness to host Ivorian athletes as part of the Host Town Initiative for the Olympic Games in 2020, as well as the city of Yokohama as part of the Host Town Initiative and the partnership between the city of Yokohama and the autonomous district of Abidjan.

On a cultural level, Côte d'Ivoire and Japan have just started a collaboration on a tour in Japan scheduled for Oct. 18 to Nov. 13, that will feature Ivorian musical and dance group Kassou-Tri via the invitation of the Min-On Concert Association.

I would like to conclude my message by expressing my sincere thanks and deep gratitude to The Japan Times, which offers its pages on every anniversary of the independence of Côte d'Ivoire, and to the partners of the embassy such as NEC Corp., Mitsubishi Corp., Ajinomoto Co., Marubeni Corp., DMM.com Group, NS Semicon Co., Ltd., Razel-Bec Côte d'Ivoire SAS, and the autonomous district of Abidjan for their continuous support for the publication of this message and the celebration of our independence day.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



Gov. of the Autonomous District of Abidjan Robert Beugré Mambé and Yokohama Mayor Fumiko Hayashi hold the signed agreement for exchange and cooperation between Abidjan and Yokohama at a ceremony in September 2017. CITY OF YOKOHAMA



Construction of the Japan-Côte d'Ivoire Friendship Interchange in Abidjan is underway. JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY

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to the People of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
on the 58th Anniversary of
Their Independence

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