

Benin National Day Special

Working toward betterment of life for all citizens

MAKARIMI ABISSOLA ADECHOUBOU
AMBASSADOR OF BENIN



Today, Aug. 1, marks the 61st anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Benin. I am honored to share this special occasion with readers of The Japan Times, our partners and

friends.

On behalf of H.E. Patrice Talon, president of the Republic of Benin, his government and the Beninese people, I would like to extend my heartfelt and healthy wishes to Their Majesties Emperor Naruhito, Empress Masako and the entire imperial family.

My gratitude goes to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and his Cabinet, the members of the Diet and the members of the Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship League, Japan-Benin Friendship Association, and the governors and mayors of cit-

ies cooperating with Benin. Furthermore, I extend my congratulations to Tokyo's organizing committee for their endurance in organizing the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games during this challenging time of COVID-19. These Games will mark a victory over this pandemic.

On April 11, Talon was re-elected for a



Left: Waterfalls in Toucountouna, northern Benin. Above: Minister of Energy Dona Housou (center) attends the inauguration ceremony for a solar power plant on May 15. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

second and last mandate with more focus on improving the life of the population.

First mandate: 2016-2021

During the first mandate, substantial reforms profoundly transformed Benin's economy. In 2019, Benin became a middle-income country with a per capita gross domestic product of \$1,250. Reforms in energy, basic infrastructure and agriculture have built a resilient and robust economy. In 2016, Benin generated none of its own energy, but by 2020, the country was able to produce 60% of its energy needs, while access to drinking water grew from 45% in 2016 to 70% in 2020. In the health care sector, reforms have resulted in the elimination of clandestine health centers. In addition, new high-tech hospitals were built to help,

inter alia, fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

A healthier future (2021-2026)

By 2026, the government will build strong and sustainable health systems by making use of better infrastructure, data systems and devices that will help improve access to drinking water, electricity and clean energy, as well as help build our educational capacity (especially technical and vocational training for agriculture) to make the jump to digitalization, improve our food security and provide better access to mobile financial services for women.

Market opportunities

Benin is the gateway to West Africa, and it provides access to a regional market of 350 million people. As a regional hub for



President Patrice Talon (right) stands with Vice President Mariam Talata during their investiture ceremony on May 23. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

tourism, services, and import and export, Benin presents an array of opportunities for any company interested in education and nutrition (via school canteens); health facilities and technical equipment; water treatment purification and irrigation; energy (solar power and mini-grids); agricultural technology and innovation;

and financial inclusion (banking and insurance).

Benin is open for business.

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

Congratulations

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the Republic of Benin
on the Occasion of
the Anniversary of
Their Independence*

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