

Tunisia national day

Building bridges of friendship and cooperation

Noureddine Hached
AMBASSADOR OF TUNISIA

As Tunisia celebrates today the 53rd anniversary of its independence, I would like to extend the greetings of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, to all members of the Imperial family, and to the government and people of the friendly nation of Japan. I also avail myself of this opportunity to express my thanks to Yoshiro Mori, president of the Japan-Tunisia Parliamentary League, for his continued support to Tunisia and to the diplomatic action of the Embassy of Tunisia in Tokyo.

2009 is a seminal year for Tunisia, with presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October. We are confident that these elections will further anchor the democratic process ushered in by President Ben Ali and consolidate the achievements of our country under his leadership. Thanks to the wide-ranging re-

forms it has undertaken, Tunisia has indeed managed, in a relatively short period of time, to make significant gains in the political, economic and social fields. Tunisia's policies and achievements have won the respect and consideration of the international community, which presents Tunisia as a model of success for developing countries. It is a model based on the continual search for a better balance between the imperatives of sustained economic development and the demands for coherent social promotion.

A member country of the World Trade Organization, Tunisia is also the first country on the southern coast of the Mediterranean to have concluded a partnership and cooperation agreement with the European Union, the main component of which was the establishment of a free-trade area. In this perspective, Tunisia has initiated an important program of multisectoral reforms aimed at laying the foundations for a solid, diversified and competitive econo-



Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali

my capable of adapting to the new international environment. The latest report on global competitiveness

2008-2009 by the Davos World Economic Forum ranks Tunisia 36th out of a total of 134 developed and emerging countries in terms of global competitiveness.

Tunisia has a long record of fruitful cooperation and close political dialogue with Japan, my objective now is to implement President Ben Ali's vision of a strategic partnership with Japan through the strengthening of our economic relations.

In 2008, two major Japanese companies, Sumitomo and Yazaki, decided to invest in Tunisia, following the path of many other foreign companies that were attracted by Tunisia's proximity and preferential trading relations with

the EU, by its highly qualified human resources, as well as by an Investment Code, which offers foreign investors considerable incentives and exemptions.

We now look forward to welcoming a larger number of Japanese companies. Promoting direct contacts between the Japanese and Tunisian business communities is crucial to achieving this objective. In this regard creating a Tunisia-Japan business group is one of my priorities.

It is also my hope that more and more Japanese tourists will visit Tunisia in the future to discover its beautiful and diverse nature, its healthy and delicious cuisine, and its rich cultural and

historical heritage, from Hannibal's Carthage to modern-day Tunisia, consolidating the people-to-people relations between Tunisia and Japan. The establishment of direct flights between our two countries would greatly contribute to achieving this objective.

On March 21, the Rades-la-Goulette Bridge will be inaugurated. A major construction project carried out in cooperation with Japan, this bridge bears testimony to the long-lasting friendship between Tunisia and Japan.

In this year of the 53rd anniversary of diplomatic relations between Tunisia and Japan, I wish long life to the Japan-Tunisia success story.



High time: A burnished metal clock tower provides a glimmering landmark toward the western end of Tunis' main thoroughfare.

High-level exchanges strengthen relations

Yoshiro Mori
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-TUNISIA
PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE

On the occasion of the National Day to celebrate the 53rd anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Tunisia, as president of the Japan-Tunisia Parliamentary League I would



like to extend my warmest congratulations to President Ben Ali and all the people of the country.

Last May, Japan hosted the fourth Tokyo International

Conference on African Development, TICAD IV, which was an important event for diplomacy with Africa.

At TICAD IV, Tunisia's prime minister, Mohamed Ghannouchi, read a message from President Ben Ali. Fifty-one countries with 41 heads of state attended the conference and actively discussed the direction of African development, putting importance on accelerating growth, ensuring human security, and addressing environmental and climate changes. I served as co-chair of the general assembly, and also engaged in separate talks with Prime Minister

Ghannouchi and many other leaders.

All comments and suggestions from African countries at TICAD IV were reflected in the discussions at the G-8 Hokkaido Toyako summit in July. Without doubt, the TICAD process has had a significant influence on African development policies in the international community. I am keen to support the process for steadily implementing and enhancing the assistance measures drawn up at TICAD IV.

Regarding the recent exchange of visits between Tunisia and Japan, Saida Chtioui, secretary of state to

the minister of foreign affairs, visited Japan last March to attend the sixth Japan-Tunisia Joint Committee meeting. Wide-ranging views were exchanged with Kenichiro Sasae, deputy minister for foreign affairs, on the bilateral relationship, as well as the situation in the Middle East and Asia. In April, Abdallah Kallel, president of the House of Councilors, visited Japan. In May, Mohamed Nouri Jouini, minister of development and international cooperation, also visited Japan. I had an opportunity to meet them and exchange views, and to my great pleasure both parties confirmed

that the relationship between the two countries had steadily strengthened.

Furthermore, the long-awaited Rades-la-Goulette Bridge, a yen loan financed project, will be inaugurated March 21. It is a memorable construction serving as a bridge of friendship between Japan and Tunisia.

From Japan, a delegation of parliamentarians headed by Asahiko Mihara, director general of the International Bureau of the Liberal Democratic Party, visited Tunisia last July and participated in the convention of the Constitutional Democratic Rally. I hope that such exchanges between

parliamentarians of both countries will be actively promoted, and will further enhance the friendly and cooperative relationship.

The bilateral relationship between Japan and Tunisia has expanded in a variety of fields, and at different levels. As president of the Japan-Tunisia Parliamentary League I would like to express my commitment again to the further development of good relations between our two countries.

Finally, on the occasion of Tunisia's National Day, I extend my best wishes for the health and prosperity of President Ben Ali, and all the people of his country.

Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Tunisia
on Their National Day

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