

# Zimbabwe independence day

## New government unites to put nation on road to recovery

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AMBASSADOR OF ZIMBABWE TO JAPAN

On the occasion of the 29th anniversary of Zimbabwe's accession to sovereign independence, I take the opportunity so kindly afforded by The Japan Times to extend warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the government and people of Japan as a whole — and to thank them, as always, for their continuing friendship and solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe.



My warm greetings go as well to the small Zimbabwean community resident in Japan.

The last year has been a particularly difficult one for all Zimbabweans as the country's political leaders, encouraged and assisted by the Southern African region — the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — and further afield by the African Union, strove and eventually managed to find enough common ground on which to end a long-standing political stalemate, and to begin to move the country forward, away from a lengthy period of economic instability, the consequences of which have been serious and in some areas severe for the people of Zimbabwe.

The General Political Agreement implemented in February this year has given rise to an inclusive national government structure, incorporating all three of the country's major political formations. Notwithstanding years of mutual suspicion and animosity between and among its various members, this new structure has performed well and putting aside those past differences, has concentrated its efforts on returning the country to the path of economic growth and prosperity, and of course seeking to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable within our society.

The task faced by the new inclusive government is far from simple. Faced on the one hand with an understandably high level of expectation from a population fatigued by the consequences of years of political infighting and economic decline, and on the other by a skeptical donor community some of whom are still determined, apparently, to try to impose themselves and their "solutions" upon the country, the inclusive government faces many challenges.

As Zimbabweans have traveled this difficult path, the support and understanding of the Southern African region, and of the continent as a whole has been of crucial importance. Southern African and



United: Leaders of the inclusive government, President Robert G. Mugabe (center) Prime Minister Morgan R. Tsvangirai (left) and Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara, pose for a photo Sept. 15, 2008, at the signing ceremony of the General Political Agreement in Harare, Zimbabwe. ZIMBABWE EMBASSY

AU solidarity with Zimbabwe succeeded in bringing about the political compromise that gave rise to the inclusive government, and enabled Zimbabweans — not outsiders — to determine their way forward. Southern African and AU solidarity with Zimbabwe, and of course the progress that continues to be made by the new inclusive government, will help to address the concerns of those skeptics who continue to impose sanctions against the country, and who continue to act to deny credit and other forms of financial and budgetary support to the new political dispensation in Harare.

Zimbabwe is potentially a very wealthy country —

ing held in Botswana in March to further accelerate the implementation of these and other support measures has come as a most welcome development, as was the decision to resuscitate the Japan-SADC High-Level Dialogue — a precursor to yet a more intense interaction, across many critical sectors, between Japan and the SADC region.

One such sector is that of tourism promotion — a recent and very welcome addition to TICAD's wide range of activities. In 2010, the FIFA World Cup comes to Africa — an event to be celebrated by the entire continent. South Africa — the host country — and the nations of Southern Africa are working closely together to ensure that the exposure, enjoyment and benefit of this huge event, specifically in terms of the tourism dividend, devolve upon the region as a whole and indeed beyond. We look for-

blessed with abundant natural resources, highly fertile land, significant mineral wealth, a magnificent tourism portfolio, and a well-educated, industrious and motivated people. In addition, Zimbabwe sits at the very heart of the SADC regional grouping and, with its road and rail networks, and its power-generation and distribution infrastructure, constitutes an essential cog in the ongoing process of regional integration and development.

Throughout this challenging period, Japan — as always a friend — has walked with us, assisting where it has felt able to do so, most especially in the area of health and food security. Such support has been generous and effective, and is sincerely appreciated by the nation as a whole. It is anticipated that further support, under the umbrella of TICAD, will be forthcoming.

The implementation of the Yokohama Action Plan — specifically the measures aimed at boosting Japanese trade with and investment in Africa — holds tremendous opportunities for the countries of SADC, including Zimbabwe. The decision by the TICAD Ministerial Follow-up meet-

ward to welcoming large numbers of visitors from Japan and other Asian countries to our region, and to the exceptional array of outstanding tourism destinations we have to offer.

Zimbabwe, along with all

African countries, warmly welcomes Japan's increasing interest in and engagement with the SADC region, and with the continent more broadly. Our collective expectation is that through TICAD this relationship will continue to strengthen, bringing us still closer together and evolving, over time, into the solid, mutually beneficial partnership we seek.



Name set in stone: The conical tower inside the Great Enclosure at Great Zimbabwe, or "stone buildings," from which the country gets its name.



"The Smoke that Thunders": The Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1989.

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to the People of the Republic of Zimbabwe  
on Their Independence Day



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