

Ethiopia national day

Nation on track for faster growth, development

Markos Tekle Rike
AMBASSADOR OF ETHIOPIA

It is my profound privilege on the 20th anniversary of our National Day to express my heartfelt, warm, respectful greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of Imperial Family, and the friendly government and people of Japan.

My warm greetings also to my compatriots in Japan and my sincere advice to them to uphold the Ethiopian core values of respect, religiousness and discipline, and always abide by our host country's rules and values.

As the triple disasters unfolded, the government and people of Ethiopia have conveyed their deepest condolences to the friendly government and people of Japan, and shown our sympathy for the victims by bringing all three major religions in the country together to pray and express their best wishes for the victims of the disaster. I would

like to mention with profound admiration the commitment and resilience of the government and people of Japan in managing the crisis in an extraordinary manner. It is also my best wish for the Japanese people, as their remarkable history attests, to overcome the disaster and rebuild the damaged areas and reintegrate the displaced in the shortest possible time.

Since the establishment of our first diplomatic relations in 1933, Ethiopia and Japan have maintained cordial relations that have been both bilateral at the government level and people-to-people. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's visit to Japan in 2008 for the Group of Eight (G-8) and TICAD IV (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) meetings and the sideline bilateral talks are among the recent high-level official visits that strengthened the two countries' bilateral cooperation. This year, the visit of Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto, the then state secretary for foreign affairs, to Addis Ababa opened wider forums for further cooperation, which was followed by the successful visit

by the Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives) Africa Committee delegation for more economic ties.

The Ethiopian Association of Japan, Ex-JOCV (Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers) members, the Mocha Dance group, the Nilo-Ethiopian Association and numerous friends of Ethiopia have been instrumental in promoting people-to-people relations between the two countries and promoting Ethiopia's image in Japan. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Ethiopian Association of Japan, which signifies the deep-rooted people-to-people friendship between our two countries.

Sound development policies and the attractive business environment in Ethiopia are currently being appraised by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Ethiopia's economic growth is expected to become the third-fastest rate in the world in the next few years. It is due to this fact that Ethiopia has been selected to host the World Economic Forum (WEF) on Africa next year. Dramatic progress in economic development and the aforementioned business environment is attracting a large number of foreign investors from around the globe. I would like to call upon the business community in Japan to come and explore the vast opportunities available for them in the country in the areas of trade, investment and tourism.

Climate change has become the greatest challenge in which African countries are more prone to its adverse consequences. Ethiopia plays a key role in adopting common positions for Africa in international climate change negotiations. We acknowledge the Japanese commitment to mitigating issues related to climate change and Japan's willingness to accommodate African voices in international cli-

mate change negotiations.

Currently, we are witnessing the impact of Japanese support in our priority areas to alleviate poverty and enhance productivity. Today, practical achievements in small and medium-size industries through the application of the *kaizen* system of industrial quality improvement, which was established with the support of Japan, attracts the interest of many industries to adopt such a system. The contribution of the Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) practical engagement in various development activities by dispatching its volunteers resulted in the improvement of livelihoods at the grassroots level.

Ethiopia has become one of the few developing nations that are on track to achieve the U.N.'s 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Ethiopia's remarkable achievement in the health and education sector in the last seven years shows its commitment to accelerating socioeconomic development. In this connection, Japanese commitment to host the MDG ministerial-level followup meeting, which will be held on June 1 and 2 in Tokyo, indicates Japan's support for the success in achieving the MDGs.

Ethiopia has benefited from the TICAD process, the mutual cooperation between Africa and Japan. The inclusion of trade and investment in the TICAD IV process is highly welcome for its role in Africa's development.

May 28 marks the demise of the Ethiopia's former dictatorial military regime and the dawn of democratic governance and overall development. It's after this event that Ethiopians have adopted the democratic constitution that recognizes and protects the true identity, history and culture of all nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia based on equality and justice, and genuinely promotes the

beauty of the nation based on the notion of unity in diversity. This year's National Day celebration is in the period after our country has registered remarkable success in its last five-year Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) and has launched another five-year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). The GTP has been prepared on the basis of the experiences gained from PASDEP with clear objectives and targets through wide public participation.

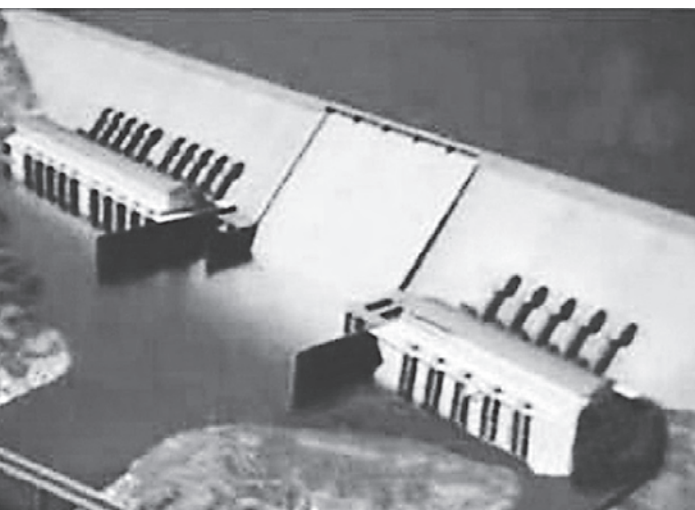
The GTP focuses on achieving greater success in economic and social sector development, and capacity building and good governance. It is also designed to address crosscutting issues like gender, population, environment and climate change, science and technology development, etc. Implementation of the

GTP requires huge resources and commitments. To this effect, emphasis is given to ensure effective public participation in the implementation and monitoring of the plan, the efficient and effective utilization of all available capacities of the public, the government and the private sector, as well as cooperation with development partners.

Harnessing more reliable and clean energy is one of the GTP targets. The launching of the Renaissance Dam on the Nile River, which will generate 5,250 megawatts, will play a key role in transforming the Ethiopian industrialization process. Ethiopia also welcomes all kinds of cooperation that enhance fair and equitable utilization of trans-boundary waters to improve the livelihoods of the people around those areas, including the Nile.



Close ties: Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (front row, right) meets the Keizai Doyukai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives) Africa Committee delegation during the group's visit to Ethiopia in March 2011. EMBASSY OF ETHIOPIA



Hydroelectric: Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam, seen in a rendering, will be capable of generating 5,250 megawatts of power and is under construction on the Nile River. EMBASSY OF ETHIOPIA

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