

Rwanda national day

Liberation: a process for determining our future

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF RWANDA

The occasion of the 17th anniversary of the Liberation Day of the Republic of Rwanda gives me a great honor and privilege to convey to Their Imperial Majesties the Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial Family, the Cabinet and the entire people of Japan the warmest greetings from the people of Rwanda.



May I also take this opportunity on behalf of the government and people of Rwanda, to express our deepest sadness and condolences to the government and people of Japan for the loss of lives and damage inflicted by the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan on March 11. The government and people of Rwanda provided its symbolic assistance through the Japanese Red Cross Society and we stand in solidarity with you as you grieve your lost loved ones and as you embark on the reconstruction phase.

This July 4, Rwanda celebrates the 49th anniversary of the access to independence as well as Liberation Day, the date when genocide against the Tutsi was stopped in 1994 by the Rwanda Patriotic Front.

In Rwanda, Liberation Day carries a lot of meaning. It symbolizes the courage, the responsibility and the wisdom to overcome the worst crime against humanity and then move on to rebuild a nation based on unity and reconciliation, inclusiveness and consensus building. It is a date and time when Rwandans remember where they come from, where they are and focus on where they are going. It is also a time to focus on the achievements and challenges, in addition to drawing inspiration and strength to move on.

Being conscious that liberation is not an event rather a process, the government from the beginning called upon Rwandans to be drivers of the process by determining their future. The government therefore made a decisive decision of empowering Rwandans to be agents of the changes they want to see themselves.

Our experience has shown us that rapid progress can only be achieved when the people for whom it is intended are mobilized and participate fully in development efforts.

Despite the fact that Rwandans started rebuilding the country from the scratch after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwandans today, under the very strong, visionary and exemplary leadership of H.E. Paul Kagame, the president of the Republic of Rwanda, are united under a common goal and are working hard to build a prosperous and viable state and achieve clear goals defined in our country's Vision 2020 and a program for creating wealth.

In the efforts to meet our aspirations, we have always enjoyed the support of friends and partners. The government and people of Rwanda appreciate the very cordial and friendly relations existing between our two countries since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Rwanda and Japan in July 1962: a relationship characterized by mutual understanding, respect and support.

Our relationship keeps growing each year, as we witnessed the opening of the Embassy of Japan in Kigali in January 2010; the Rwanda-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Association was officially launched in Tokyo on March 23, 2011. We are hopeful that these are going to deepen our bilateral relations.

Rwanda also appreciates the support of the government and the people of Japan on her road map to development through the agreed areas of intervention,

namely, human resources development, rural transformation and improvement of economic infrastructures and business development.

In line with the above-mentioned sectors, various projects have been implemented in the fields of water supply, agriculture, energy, capacity building, among others.

This gives me the opportunity to praise the key role played by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Rwanda's development efforts.

We are also glad to note that there is a welcomed growing trend moving beyond the government-to-government relationship to more people-to-people interaction, both culturally as well as on exploration of business opportunities. It is our firm belief that the growing interest provides an invaluable opportunity to explore more opportunities for cooperation that more importantly will lead to increased Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Rwanda and trade between the two countries.

Next year, 2012, our two countries will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. This gives us an ample time to take stock of fruitful cooperation we have had in the past 50 years and with optimism look forward with determination to forge a strategic relationship.

There can be no doubt that with the support of our development partners such as Japan, Rwanda has made good progress in all key areas in the last 17 years.

Rwanda now have security

throughout the whole country. Rwandans and foreigners can go about their business without fear. Through decentralization, services have been brought closer to the people. Rwandans have a bigger role in choosing their own leaders and a say in programs intended for them. Regular, free and peaceful elections are now part of Rwandan culture, as are accountability and transparency.

Grassroots empowerment also prioritized the involvement of women in all decision making processes, which did not only stir up our development but also brought about social harmony and cohesion. Today, the 51.6 percent of the students at the primary and secondary school level are girls and 44 percent at the university level. The Rwandan Parliament is ranked No. 1 in the world with a majority of women, at 56 percent, while the Rwanda National Police have the largest number of female peacekeepers in peacekeeping missions around the world.

Rwanda's economy continues to grow: In the last few years, our gross domestic product (GDP) has been growing at an average rate of 7 percent annually. This growth does not represent only a statistical figure but more importantly the tangible improvement of living conditions of ordinary Rwandans that is vividly seen: expansion of access to education (primary enrollment level for school-going children reached 95.4 percent in 2010 and 96.5 percent for girls), expanded and comprehensive health services for all (with health insurance schemes of

around 96 percent of the whole population covered from only 7 percent in 2003). Rwanda has achieved food security for all from the last two years due to high investments in the agriculture sector to the tune of about 10.2 percent of the total government budget. The number of Rwandans with access to clean water has risen from 41 percent in 2003 to 80 percent in 2010 and access to antiretroviral treatment has increased to 77 percent of people who needed it in 2009 up from 35 percent in 2005.

Rwanda also has created a very conducive world-class business environment and was ranked the first and the second best World Business Reformer in 2009 and 2010, respectively, by the World Bank in their Doing Business Report. This has paid dividends as FDI increased from a low of \$28 million in 2005 to \$593 million in 2009.

Rwanda also has prioritized technology because it is a key pillar in economic development. The government has invested a lot of money in order to connect people to this technology, so that it can be used to deliver different services. Rwanda is one of the handful African countries with a fiber-optic network throughout the country. This will be the basis for how information and communications technology (ICT) will contribute to the growth of the economy.

Rwanda joined the East African Community (EAC) in July 2007: other members are Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Rwanda in collaboration with other EAC partner states has started implement-



Culture: Dance plays an important role in the tradition of all Rwandan people. EMBASSY OF RWANDA

ing the Common Market Protocol since July 2010, while negotiations of the Monetary Union Protocol, which are under way, are expected to be concluded by the end of this year. Rwanda also is an active member of the COMESA (Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa) and we also joined the Commonwealth in November 2009. This will definitely enhance greater cooperation and trade, and benefit our citizens in terms of business, education and others.

We take this opportunity to call upon members of the Japanese business community and investors to take advantages of this conducive business environment and use Rwanda as an entry point to access these enlarged and potential markets.

It also gives me pleasure to invite Japanese tourists to visit Rwanda, famously known as the "land of a thousand hills," and enjoy unique Rwandan hospitality and see the famous mountain gorillas.

We were able to make these

and many more achievements because we have a common vision, cooperation, the will to find solutions to our challenges and, where necessary, seek innovative ones from our culture, such as "gacaca," "imihigo," "abunzi," "umuganda" and "ubudehe." We were able to achieve them because we worked transparently, refused to tolerate mediocrity, were not complacent and, above all, insisted on our dignity.

While the challenges ahead are still enormous, the government and the people of Rwanda are very confident that together with friendly nations, Japan in particular, we are on the right track to building a better world.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to highly appreciate all institutions, companies and individuals in Japan for their support and business engagements in Rwanda, and particularly to the management of Zensho Group, Toyota Tsusho Corp., Ataka Trading Co. and Hotel Ibis Roppongi, for sponsoring the publication of this article.



Baby primate: The mountain gorilla is one of Rwanda's leading tourist attractions. EMBASSY OF RWANDA

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Rwanda on the 49th Anniversary of the Independence and 17th Anniversary of the Liberation Day



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We, Zensho group, have been developing fair trade projects with people of many countries. By face-to-face communication, we have a reciprocal relationship at a coffee farm in the south of Rwanda.

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