

Gabon independence day

Making key steps toward emergence

François Pendjet Bombila
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF GABON

The Independence Day of the Gabonese Republic, full of magical moments that remind everyone of the united destiny of the people, has always been the occasion for the Gabonese Embassy in Japan to showcase the extent of Gabon's cooperation with its privileged partner.



Aug. 17 is the 51st anniversary of Gabon's declaration of independence. As the chargé d'affaires a.i., I would like to express to the readers of The Japan Times and to convey, in the name of the President of the Gabonese Republic H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, Prime Minister Paul Biyoghe Mba, the government and the Gabonese people, our condolences to the families of victims of the March 11 earthquake that hit Japan's northeast; also, our wishes for the peace, good health and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to the entire Imperial Family.

Our heartfelt greetings go also to the government led by Prime Minister Naoto Kan, to the members of Japanese corporations and to the very friendly population of Japan.

This occasion allows us also to express our sincere greetings to the small community of Gabonese compatriots, i.e., the residents, students and trainees in Japan, and as well to many friends of Gabon in our several countries of jurisdiction.

Since the start of the "Third Republic" with the coming to power of President Bongo, we can speak of the country taking a new path through political, economic and social plans.

Transition of power

After the death on June 8, 2009, of President Omar Bongo Ondimba, the current president's father, the Gabonese were united in the pain and the mourning period conformed to the fundamental law, the constitution, in which Article 13 stipulates that in case of vacancy of

the head of state, the president of the Senate should deputize and should prepare a presidential election in 45 days after the observation of vacancy.

Thus, as soon as June 10, 2009, the president of the Constitutional Court made the president of Senate, Rose Francine Rogombe, take the oath in front of the elected national representatives and constituent bodies.

The acting president and the transitional government managed by Prime Minister Biyoghe Mba were united with the organization that helped President Bongo rise to the highest office. With the oath of Oct. 16, 2009, Bongo became the third president of the Gabonese Republic, after Léon Mba and Omar Bongo Ondimba.

Policy of emergence

A privileged actor in Gabonese political activities since almost two decades ago, President Bongo wants to quickly tackle the application and execution of his social program "The Future in Confidence," which aims to transform Gabon so that it will enter the category of emerging and prosperous countries, situated under the sign of unity and solidarity. For that, the preservation of peace and social cohesion, which are essential bases for economic development of the country, should be taken into account.

Engaged on brave and ambitious reforms to guarantee a better well-being to all Gabonese and to make Gabon a recognized and respected force, the priorities stated by the president are:

- better management of public finances;
- better redistribution of welfare and responsibilities in the behavior of public affairs;
- justice for all;
- construction of routes passable in all seasons;
- employment of young people and increasing the purchasing power of households;
- solidarity toward the economically weak population;

- access to water and energy;
- health, education, housing and job training of young people;
- keeping of the peace and national unity.

To be quickly realized and to stimulate approbation of the social program, "The Future in Confidence" includes three major pillars.

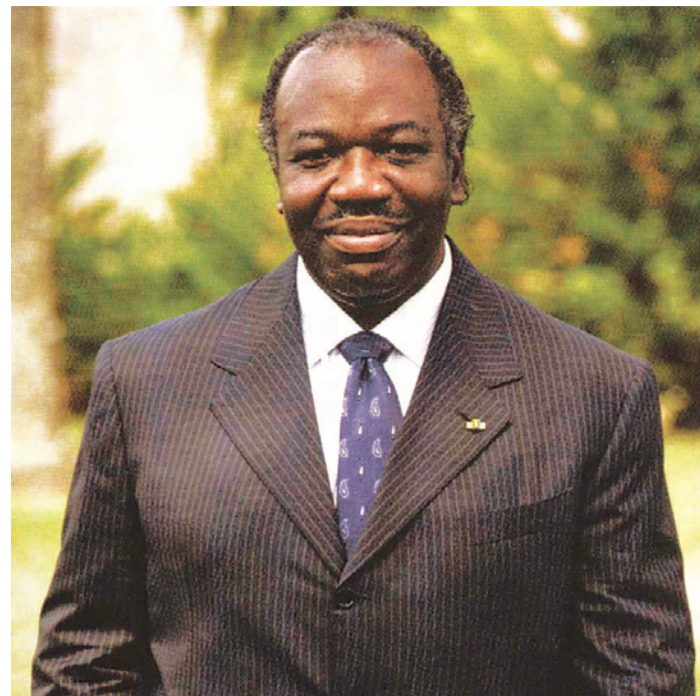
Pillars of emergence

Regarding the pillar "Green Gabon," since the beginning of his mandate, President Bongo integrated the environment with all political sectors. Green Gabon is based on the valorization of 22 million hectares of forest where 13 national parks are already preserved, guaranteeing the balance of the planet.

Also, during the first African High-Level Conference on Biodiversity, which took place in September 2010 in Libreville, the Gabonese president was actively involved in order to represent his peers in New York at the 65th United Nations General Assembly, which was dedicated to the climate and biodiversity, before coming, in October 2010, to Nagoya to defend the common positions adopted by the heads of state of the African continent at the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity.

Furthermore, with more than 20 million hectares of arable but unexploited land and a weather adapted for farming, Gabon has the means to develop and promote an agricultural industry that will enable it to feed its people and to export at the same time. This is goal on which the president focuses as a condition for the accession of Gabon to the status of an emerging country.

Seen in this way, the green economy, which operates in respect of the environment, looks to be one of the carriers of the global economy of the 21st century, and Gabon will make use of its numerous assets to become an important actor.



Ali Bongo Ondimba, president of the Gabonese Republic

The concept of "Industrial Gabon" is the pillar that answers the concerns of locally transforming our raw materials. The dynamics started with the production of ferromanganese and goes on with the construction of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) of Nkok, situated about 30 km from Libreville, and of Cap Lopez in Ogooué Maritime, where the wood industry and that of nitrogenous fertilizers are to be developed.

As such, the interdiction since May 15, 2010, on the export of wood logs contributes to the development of a new industrial fabric of transformation that is expected to generate jobs and new professions.

The pillar "Gabon of Services" lies on the valorization of human resources, financial services and brand-new information technologies with the implementation of a broadband infrastructure across the whole territory that is to be executed in three steps: accomplishment of a local fiber-optic loop in Libreville and its neighboring areas (a project already carried out by Gabon Telecom); realiza-

tion, fisheries, environment and health. Manufactured products, such as automobiles (more than 65 percent of the cars in Gabon are fabricated in Japan), components and electronic products as well as heavy equipment, are exported to Gabon, which, in return, sells to Japan oil, manganese, wood and fisheries products.

The fisheries sector makes up the most dynamic area between the two countries. An agreement about the assistance and the professional training of Gabonese small-scale fishers, fisheries research, support for the elaboration of statistical data and protection of fisheries resources was signed between Gabon, Japan Tuna and the Japan Fisheries Agency in 2008.

In regard to the way the relations will proceed, we would say that the diplomatic relations between Gabon and Japan are constant, judging by the convergence of views on international organizations, such as the U.N. and its systems. Gabon and Japan have always reaffirmed their common interest for peace and world stability.

The economic and commercial cooperation progresses normally, Japan being among the first suppliers for Gabon.

On the technical front, Japan has received, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), more than 350 trainees from Gabon, and sent 10 Japanese fisheries experts and around 40 young volunteers in the fields of education, agriculture, management of rural communities and screening of HIV/AIDS to Gabon.

This is our sincere hope that our two countries will remain exceptional partners, as shown above, in as many fields as possible, hopefully in more than at the present time. To that end, Gabonese diplomacy will continue its efforts to enrich the cordial, friendly relationship that Japan and Gabon have been developing for more than a half-century.

As for cooperation with Japan, we can say that our ties led Japan to numerous investments in the sectors of primary educa-

tion of infrastructures for broadband transmission toward the interior of the country; and the installation of local fiber-optic loops in prefectural capitals, districts, larger villages, etc. Solidly set up, these three pillars that are currently being executed as the economic and social program of the government aim to improve good governance and diversify an economy long dominated by the oil sector.

Projects of emergence

Since his nomination, President Bongo, through several trips to actual sites, has carried out infrastructure projects that help economic growth while launching other restoration work on roads, constructing new routes and so forth.

As for the transport infrastructure, the new authorities have executed the reorganization of the National Agency of Civil Aviation (ANAC), whose mission is to implement air policy, a key factor for the development of Gabonese civil aviation.

The construction of a deep-water port in Mayumba, in southwest Gabon, will enable the region's value to be enhanced thanks to the commercialization and exportation of natural resources (iron, wood materials, oil, talc, gold, agricultural and fisheries products, etc.).

Regarding urban development, the government, with the ministry of energy and hydraulic resources, signed a contract for the engineering, supply and construction of a new electric infrastructure (high and low voltage network, electrifying rural areas and public lighting).

Also remarkable is the construction of 5,000 apartments per year allotted to the housing ministry, to which an increased budget is allowed at 40 billion FCFA in 2010 to offer each Gabonese a better, more decent environment and accommodations.

To that end, a partnership with the Olam Gabon Co. has been established for its expertise in the realization of the first SEZ (Special Economic Zone) of Nkok.

Without going into exhaustive details of the projects of emergence, we should remember that they concern all the fields defined by the social project of President Bongo, "The Future in Confidence." These incorporate planning in the fields of job training, employment, health and environment, including ecotourism.

Foreign policy

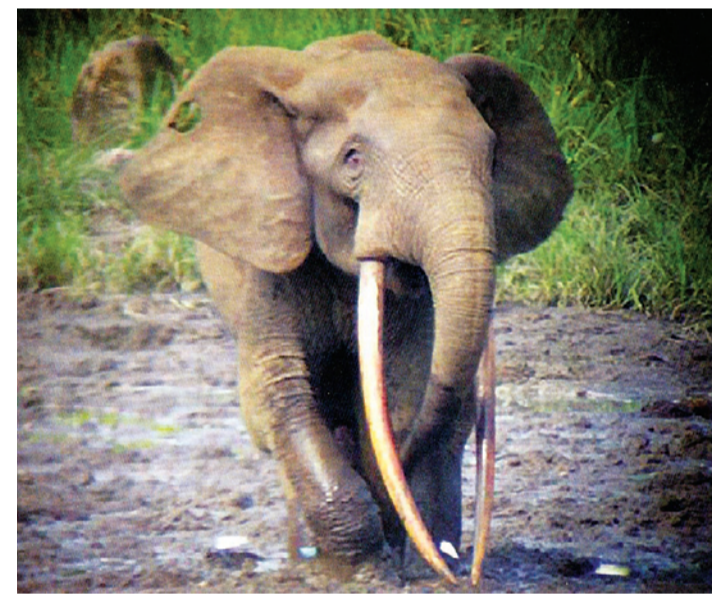
At this privileged moment of the



Future: A rendering of Libreville that will bring modernity and world-class standards to Gabon. EMBASSY OF GABON



Sustainability: Gabon hopes many people can experience the ecotourism experiences available. EMBASSY OF GABON



Wildlife: Elephants are part of the magic of exploring Gabon. EMBASSY OF GABON

Congratulations
to the People of the Gabonese Republic
on the Occasion of the 51st Anniversary
of Their Independence Day



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