

Kenya national day

Time is ripe for enhanced partnership with Japan

Benson H.O. Ogutu
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA

On this momentous day when the Republic of Kenya celebrates and honors the heroes and heroines of our freedom struggle, I convey gracious greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. We pray that Their Imperial Majesties will continue to enjoy good health and further wish for the prosperity of the Japanese people. It is also my pleasure to pay special compliments to the distinguished readers of The Japan Times on this auspicious occasion marking the 48th anniversary of our independence.



Kenya's recall vividly the unprecedented triple tragedy that visited Japan in March. I take this opportunity to commend the government and indeed the people of Japan for the bravery, maturity and dignity with which they have dealt with the calamity. We reiterate Kenya's continued solidarity with Japan in the reconstruction efforts and we wish all a quick recovery.

It is my honor and privilege to congratulate all Kenyan citizens resident in Japan on this auspicious occasion. We wish to commend you all on your patriotism and positive contribution toward the strengthening of Kenya-Japan relations. I particularly salute our athletes for flying our flag high and other professionals who have always displayed exemplary hard work and dedication.

As we commemorate our country's independence, we also reflect on the cordial and fraternal ties that characterize the relations between Kenya and Japan. We cherish the fact that since our independence in 1963, the government and people of Japan have always stood by Kenya. Not surprisingly therefore, Japan is our leading development partner. Indeed, our bilateral relations have continued to expand in the last few years. This is attested to by high-level exchanges witnessed between our two countries in the recent past. Furthermore, it is remarkable that Nairobi has continued to host one of the largest Japanese communities in Africa, including serving as the regional center for a number of them.

In the area of infrastructure development, Kenyans appreciate the fact that our partnership is focusing on areas that are critical to national development, including key programs under the Vision 2030 plan. Infrastructure development, including road network construction and energy sector development, is emphasized under TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) IV as being critical to the economic integration and support for the promotion of trade and investment in Africa.

Kenya is currently undertaking the most ambitious infrastructure investment programs in our nation's history, aimed at enhancing our regional integration process. We have begun the development of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor Project. This new transport corridor will open up vast parts of Kenya and stimu-

late economic and social development. Most importantly, the project will link Kenya to Ethiopia and South Sudan through the pipeline, railway line and highway, thereby enhancing trade and investment in our region. In the long term, this project will contribute to the developments of the trans-Africa highway, which is a key project under the African Union.

Other interventions that we are undertaking include the expansion as well as modernization of our airports, pipelines, roads and telecommunications in order to meet the regional demand for efficient transport services. We have also continued to modernize the port of Mombasa. This is in recognition of the importance of the port of Mombasa in facilitating regional trade and investments.

We wish to assure our partners and business fraternity of Kenya's commitment to ensuring efficient and timely port services. In a similar vein, the government is undertaking measures whose objective is to facilitate private sector investment in infrastructure development and management. We are confident that with the participation of the private sector we can mobilize our own resources to finance infrastructure development. We hope to see more involvement from Japan in these processes.

Due to the importance of energy in the economy, the government has placed high priority to increasing power generation capacity in order to meet the existing demand. In spite of progress we have made in this direction, we are still experiencing a deficit in power generation. Kenya is now reviewing its power development strategy in order to minimize dependence on hydropower generation. In this regard, the government is putting more emphasis on green energy development, with a special focus on geothermal resources, as well as coal, oil and wind power plants. In this regard, therefore, we welcome the Japanese private sector to exploit this massive potential by investing in geothermal power generation either independently or in partnership with the public sector. Additional support from our development partners is also sought in exploiting this geothermal potential as part of the global strategy for mitigating climate change.

In the field of agriculture, Japan has been a reliable partner in efforts toward improved agricultural productivity and food security, which is key to the attainment of the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals. We particularly appreciate the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), an initiative with the aim of doubling rice production in Africa within 10 years. Under this initiative, one of the major irrigation schemes in Kenya—the Mwea—has greatly expanded.

In the area of capacity building, it is notable that over 6,000

Kenyans have thus far been trained in Japan. In addition, Japan is funding educational programs in Kenya including the Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education (SMASSE).

In environmental conservation, Japan and Kenya share a unique responsibility and a common vision for global sustainability. Kenyans appreciate Japan's support for ongoing efforts to strengthen the U.N. Office in Nairobi as well as ongoing discussions on climate change and the transformation of International Environmental Governance (IEG).

Commercial interactions between our two countries are witnessing an upward trend with the trade volume now in excess of ¥50 billion. Although the balance of trade is still heavily tilted in favor of Japan, we are hoping that this gap can be bridged through increased exports to Japan as a result of trade diversification, joint ventures and direct investments. I, therefore, take this opportunity to invite prospective Japanese entrepreneurs to explore the wide-ranging opportunities available in the expanded East African Community with a population of almost 130 million. Areas that are ready for foreign direct investments include agriculture, mining, tourism, real estate development and trade.

East Africa boasts one of the largest single-bloc regional markets in Africa. This market is made even bigger by a series of mutually beneficial partnerships with regional blocs such as COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) and SADC (Southern African Development Community), boasting a combined population well over 600 million. It is noted that negotiations in deepening integration among the three regional economic communities is ongoing. The aim is the eventual establishment of a Tripartite Free Trade Area that will bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market, increase investment flows, enhance competitiveness and develop cross-regional infrastructure.

In the field of tourism, the word "Kenya" is synonymous with the African safari. As the home of the "Big Five" (lion, leopard, elephant, rhinoceros and buffalo) the people of Japan are invited to visit Kenya, where they will enjoy an incredible range of fascinating natural beauty including the open savanna, the deep tropical rain forest, freshwater lakes, alpine meadows, spectacular coral reefs, caves and beaches.

Last August, Kenya scored a major milestone event by the promulgation of a new "katiba," or constitution. This "katiba" has created institutions that ensure accountability, efficiency and responsiveness by those in authority to the needs of the people. The new constitution also provides for a legal framework for gender equality and women's



Capital: Popularly known as the "Green City in the Sun," Nairobi is one of the most prominent cities in Africa. At right, the Olkaria II Power Station, about 100 km northwest of Nairobi, is the largest geothermal power plant in Africa. EMBASSY OF KENYA / KENYA TOURISM BOARD



empowerment.

I wish to thank the government and people of Japan for their love and generosity to the people of the Horn of Africa, including Kenya, when we recently faced the worst drought and famine in the last six decades. We appreciate your generous donations, which went a long way to avert a catastrophic food crisis in Kenya and the region at the time. More importantly, however, we have the burden to eradicate the perennial drought and famine situations in the medium and long term as contained in the Nairobi Strategy adopted at the Summit on the Horn of Africa Crisis on

Sept. 9. The strategy focuses on preventive rather than reactive measures, and should be holistic rather than emergency-oriented. This is an area that needs enhanced partnership within the

region and beyond. Finally, I wish to record our appreciation to all those who have sent us messages of good will. We are particularly grateful to the management of The Japan

Times for this space and we wish them and all its readers a happy and enjoyable festive season. For more information about Kenya, please visit our Mission website at www.kenyarep-jp.com.



First victory: Josphat Ndambiri of Kenya wins the 2011 Fukuoka International Marathon on Dec. 4. EMBASSY OF KENYA

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on the 48th Anniversary of
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