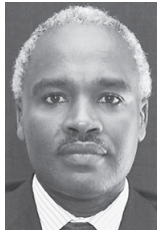


Rwanda national day

Celebrating 50th anniversary of independence, ties with Japan

Charles Murigande
AMBASSADOR OF RWANDA

Today, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the independence of Rwanda from colonial rule. We are also celebrating the 50th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Rwanda and Japan.



On this occasion, it gives me a great honor and privilege to convey to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the Cabinet and the entire people of Japan the warmest greetings from the people of Rwanda.

It is worth recalling that Rwanda as an organized country under that name existed centuries long before the 1884-85 Berlin Conference that divided Africa among the Europeans. It became a colony of Germany, which was later replaced by Belgium after World War I.

As Rwandans, we want to use this occasion to reflect on Rwanda's post-independence history, on our struggles and challenges and on the lessons we have learned as a people determined to forge forward for a brighter future.

Firstly, we remember the immediate 32 post-independence years (1962-1994) as wasted ones. Indeed, the immediate two post-colonial regimes were bent on the same exploitative and divisive colonial policies of divide and rule and had no unifying political agenda aimed at reclaiming our national identity,

which existed in pre-colonial times. This ideological bankruptcy did not only institutionalize discrimination, exclusion, massacres and forced exile of their own fellow Rwandans, worst still it culminated in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

Secondly, this is the moment to proudly remember the good part of us Rwandans that triumphed over the evil that had engulfed our society. We celebrate the triumph of the forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), who single-handedly stopped the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis and brought back hope to the Rwandan people and to humanity.

The theme "A journey of resilience" chosen for this 50th anniversary of independence expresses our acknowledgement that we had our troubled past but have prevailed as Rwandans. The spirit of the Rwandan people, a spirit of self-value and self-belief, has survived the oppression of the colonial era as well as the discrimination, cyclical massacres and forced exile policies of the two post-independence regimes.

Though Rwandans started rebuilding the country from scratch after the 1994 tragedy, today, under the very strong, visionary and exemplary leadership of President Paul Kagame, they are rebuilding unity and national cohesion, forging a shared vision and destiny, restoring people's dignity and pride and resolutely embarking on a journey of peace, security, justice, democracy and prosperity as envisioned in the country's development vision 2020.

Rwanda's economy con-

tinues to grow with an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 8.3 percent over the last six years. GDP per capita has tripled in the last 12 years. This has been an inclusive growth that has translated into the direct improvement of daily lives of ordinary Rwandans across the country. Indeed, between 2006 and 2011, the poverty rate at the national level was reduced by 12 percent, which means an annual reduction rate of 2.4 percent, putting Rwanda in the league of China (2.56 percent), Thailand (2.50) and Vietnam (2.75) according to the U.N. Development Program in Rwanda. This is further evidenced by expanded access to education (primary net enrollment rate was at 95.4 percent in 2010), expanded health services for all (96 percent of the population are covered by a health insurance scheme), increased access to clean water (from 41 percent in 2003 to 80 percent in 2010) and higher food security achieved through investing about 10.2 percent of the national budget in agriculture.

Rwanda also has created a very conducive world-class business environment and was ranked the first and second best World Business Reformer in the year 2009 and 2010, respectively, by the World Bank in its Doing Business Report. As a result, foreign direct investment (FDI) increased from \$28 million in 2005 to \$593 million in 2009.

The above achievements were due to the fact that local communities were empowered to be agents of change through decentralization programs, where they choose their own develop-

ment priorities. Women's empowerment and involvement in all decision making processes is an example of such policy. The Rwandan Parliament is ranked No. 1 in the world with a majority of women at 56 percent and Rwanda has achieved gender parity in many sectors of life, especially in education.

Rwanda is one of the handful of African countries with a national fiber-optic network backbone covering the entire country. This has not only given Rwandans access to available global IT solutions but more importantly it enabled them to create business out of it and improve service delivery, thus contributing to the above-mentioned economic growth.

We were able to register these achievements because of our determination to squarely confront our challenges and, where necessary, seek innovative homegrown solutions inspired by our own culture on the one hand, and because of the good governance characterized by transparency and refusal to tolerate mediocrity and corruption on the other.

As a self-determined people, we have been able to freely establish and develop excellent and fruitful relations with countries from all continents. We have been closely working with these countries to achieve regional and global peace and prosperity, and to promote and protect the shared belief in the fundamental rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small.

As mentioned in the beginning, this year also marks the



Traditional and modern: Dance plays an important role in the traditions of the Rwandan people. Right: Opened in 2011, Kigali City Tower is a 20-story skyscraper that contributes to the redefining of Kigali as a thriving, modern capital filled with possibilities. EMBASSY OF RWANDA



50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Rwanda and Japan. The government and people of Rwanda value the very cordial and friendly relations characterized by mutual understanding, respect and support that exist between our two countries.

Rwanda appreciates the support of the government and the people of Japan on its road to development. It gives me the opportunity to praise the key role played by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Rwanda's development through

the implementation of various projects in human resources development, rural transformation and improvement of economic infrastructures and business development.

In addition to this fruitful government-to-government relationship, we are very glad to note an expansion of people-to-people interactions. It is our firm belief that this will lead to various forms of cooperation and an increase in Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) to Rwanda and trade between the two countries.

There can be no doubt that with the support of our development partners, such as Japan, Rwanda has made tremendous progress in the last 18 years. We take this opportunity to call upon members of the Japanese business community to take advantage of Rwanda's conducive business environment and use Rwanda as an entry point to access enlarged and potential markets of the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL). It also gives me pleasure to invite Japanese tourists to visit Rwanda, famously known as a "land of a thousand hills and a million smiles", and

enjoy unique Rwandan hospitality and see famous mountain gorillas.

Though we still face enormous challenges on our development road, we are nevertheless sure that we will get where we want to be. We have already overcome more difficult challenges and, in so doing, gained the confidence and strength to face those that lie ahead.

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

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Rwanda on the 50th Anniversary of Independence and 18th Anniversary of the Liberation Day



We, Zensho group, have been developing fair trade projects with people of many countries. By face-to-face communication, we have reciprocal relationships at coffee farms in Rwanda.

ZENSHO

<http://www.zensho.co.jp/en/>

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Rwanda
on the 50th Anniversary of the Independence
and 18th Anniversary of the Liberation Day

TOYOTA TSUSHO CORPORATION

Head Office : 4-9-8, Meieki, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya 81-52-584-5013
Tokyo Head Office : 2-3-13, Konan, Minato-ku, Tokyo 81-3-4306-5000

www.toyota-tsusho.com

Akagera Motors S.A.R.L

(Official Authorized Toyota Distributor in Rwanda)
P.O. BOX 3774, Kigali, Rwanda
TEL: 250-57-5220 FAX: 250-57-3018
Web site: <http://www.toyota-africa.com/countrytop/rwanda>

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Rwanda
on the 50th Anniversary of the Independence
and 18th Anniversary of the Liberation Day



ATAKA TRADING CO., LTD.

<http://www.specialtycoffee.jp>
4F, Arais No. 2 Bldg.,
5-4, Nihonbashi Hakozaiki-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103-0015
Tel: 03-5640-1911

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Rwanda
on the 50th Anniversary of the Independence
and 18th Anniversary of the Liberation Day

hotel IBIS
ROPPONGI

HOTEL IBIS ROPPONGI

<http://www.ibis-hotel.com>
phone: 03-3403-4411 fax: 03-3479-0609
14-4, Roppongi 7-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan