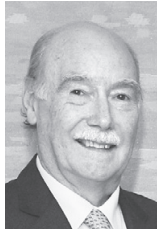


Zimbabwe independence day

Time of critical importance as nation seeks to reforge global partnerships

Stuart H. Comberbach
AMBASSADOR OF ZIMBABWE

The 33rd anniversary of Zimbabwe's accession to sovereign independence occurs at a time of critical importance in the history of our young nation — still wrestling with the complex aftermath of the long and painful struggle for independence while, at the same time, striving to find a practical way to re-engage with those erstwhile friends and partners who chose, a decade ago, to distance themselves from us.



Not an easy task given the depth of mutual antipathy and lack of trust which, regrettably, persists between Harare and certainly some Western capitals. And yet, some headway has indeed been made in this regard — reflecting progress on the ground within Zimbabwe itself as the nation gears up for another set of harmonized elections (municipal, legislative — both houses of Parliament — and presidential) later this year.

Just five years ago, in 2008, levels of suspicion and mistrust between and among Zimbabweans of differing political views and parties was at an all-time high — fuelled, to a considerable extent, by a wholly unacceptable degree of meddling in our internal affairs from way beyond our borders. Those who had waged the long war of liberation and who had forced an end to colonial rule were determined that Zimbabwe would never again be a colony and, not without justification, identified the then newly emergent political opposition within Zimbabwe as serving more the interests of foreigners rather than those of their own people. Add the polarizing reality of a hard-fought election campaign and the effects of the truly toxic media circus that enveloped the 2008 elections, and the prospects for trouble were clear for all to see.

And trouble there was. The 2008 elections were marred by a level of inter-party violence previously unknown in Zimbabwe. The predictable result — a disputed election outcome — gave

birth to the Southern African Development Community (SADC)-brokered three-party coalition administration that has governed Zimbabwe since February 2009 and which is now in the final stages of preparing those new harmonized elections.

The country now has a new constitution — overwhelmingly approved by the people of Zimbabwe in a national referendum held on March 16 this year. Now, the country awaits the proclamation of the election date.

Although it has not been without difficulty, and although all parties to the coalition government agree that it (the coalition) has outlived its usefulness, this period of shared governance and shared responsibility has contributed immensely to the progress recorded in Zimbabwe across all sectors — social, political and economic — over the past four years.

More than that, it has helped all parties to the coalition to see each other as political competitors, rather than enemies, and as fellow Zimbabweans who have no other choice but to work together.

The international media is less toxic now than in the past and the degree of foreign interference in our affairs has somewhat diminished, although it remains a troublesome feature of political life in Zimbabwe.

Agriculture continues to re-



President Robert Mugabe of the Republic of Zimbabwe

cover — most noticeably in the important export-tobacco sector, where new indigenous growers are making rapid strides and where annual production totals are nearing the levels recorded in the late 1990s, before the country entered turbulent times.

Taking full advantage of buoyant commodity prices over the past few years, metal and strategic mineral producers in Zimbabwe have ramped up production and exports, and given the recognized but still largely untapped mineral wealth of the country, the prospect of sizeable

foreign investment in the exploration, mining and beneficiation of key minerals — including platinum, nickel and chromium — is considerable, including from within the SADC region itself.

Much has been written about Zimbabwe's diamonds. Already a very significant producer of both industrial and gem-quality stones, the recent discovery of additional deposits in Zimbabwe will ensure that, notwithstanding the challenges involved, the country will continue its steady climb up the ranks of leading global producers.

Tourism arrivals — a large revenue earner for the country — continue to grow, with the primary destination being the world-famous Victoria Falls (which we are fortunate to share with our neighbors, the Republic of Zambia). In recognition of the drawing-power and the iconic importance of "The Falls", or "Mosi oa Tunya" (The Smoke that Thunders), the honor of hosting the 2013 United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) General Assembly was jointly awarded to Zimbabwe and Zambia and, with preparations now well-advanced, both countries, and the SADC region, look forward to a most successful gathering in August.

Japan, as always, remains consistent in its balanced approach toward Zimbabwe — cautious in terms of its engagement, but



Glory and power: The Victoria Falls, one of the largest waterfalls in the world, and Great Zimbabwe (right), a ruined city whose construction started in the 11th century as the capital of the Munhumutapa Kingdom, are designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites. EMBASSY OF ZIMBABWE



always supportive in its own understated but nevertheless effective manner.

The resumption, in 2012, of high-level dialogue between Japan and Zimbabwe, coupled with enhanced Japanese private sector interest in opportunities in the infrastructure and mining development sector in the country and an awakened recognition of the pivotal strategic importance of Zimbabwe to the accelerating regional-integration process of the SADC, all augur well for our future relationship with Japan and others.

Like all other African countries, we look forward to a very successful fifth Tokyo International Conference on African

Development (TICAD V) in Yokohama in June this year.

Zimbabwe, SADC and Africa more broadly are on the move: and all of us would want to see Japan more firmly on board as a friend and as a partner. TICAD V provides a unique opportunity not only to further reinforce these existing relationships, but also to pave the way for a far greater engagement by the Japanese private sector across our vast continent — moving the hitherto largely ODA-based TICAD process toward the mutually beneficial strategic partnership we all seek.

It is an opportunity that none of us — including Japan — should miss.

Congratulations

We use a mineral called Petalite from Zimbabwe to make *Donabe*, a fire-proof casserole pot.

私たちは、ジンバブエ共和国のペタライトという鉱物で、土鍋を作っています。

Peace

平和への願い

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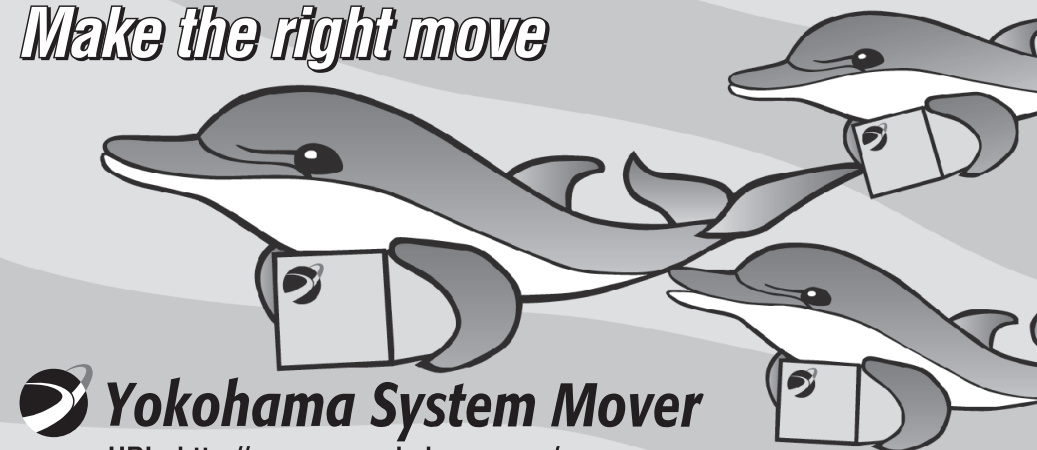
Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Zimbabwe on Their Independence Day

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Congratulations

to the People of
the Republic of Zimbabwe
on the 33rd Anniversary
of Their Independence

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Head Office : 4-9-8, Meieki, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya 81-52-584-5013
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