
Togo national day

Fulfilling responsibilities with determination

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It's a great honor for me to address you readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the 53rd independence anniversary of my country, Togo.



Since April 27, 1960, 53 long and exciting years have passed during which the Togolese people have faced many difficulties but also made a lot of achievements.

In fact, the recent history of Togo was fraught with pitfalls and the Togolese people have still in memory the long socio-political crisis the country has faced for more than 15 years, with sanctions and the disruption of cooperation from its main development partners.

Despite the difficulties and thanks to the leadership and pragmatic vision of H.E. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe, president of the Republic of Togo, coupled with the spirit of solidarity and perseverance of the population, the nation has, since the year

2005, relentlessly engaged in major reforms in the political, economic and social fields that lead to the resumption of the cooperation between Togo and its former international partners.

Today, it is a great satisfaction and pride for us Togolese people to acknowledge that our country has fully retaken its place in the community of nations, wherein it intends to truly fulfill its duties and obligations. That is exactly the reason why, since Jan. 1, 2012, Togo has been fulfilling its responsibilities with determination in its capacity as non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

As mentioned earlier, even though Togo has succeeded in definitively turning this hard and difficult page of its history, however, it must be noted that it must address the numerous challenges related to the welfare of its population as well.

That is why the government has initiated and executed a number of programs solely aimed at development and poverty alleviation.

I do not wish to make an apology of the different forms of reforms engaged in the sector of

the economy and the public finances in order to stimulate the growth, but allow me to place an emphasis on the very ambitious economic reforms program undertaken by my country, Togo, for several years now, which are aimed at modernizing the communication infrastructure.

Togo is home to the headquarters of many big firms such as the regional airline company Askya, the Pan-African Bank Ecobank and thanks to its strategic port, the only portion of the Atlantic coast with deepwater, Togo is positioned as the economic hub of the West African region.

Besides, renovation work is in progress at the international airport of Lome for its modernization and extension of its runways, and the third dock at the free port of Lome is being constructed. In general, my country is aiming at becoming a port of transit and real hub in the sub-region.

This celebration is also the occasion for me to appreciate the excellent and strong friendship and cooperative relations that exist between Japan and Togo, a relationship that has become much stronger in the course of the recent years with the open-

ing of the Togolese diplomatic mission in Tokyo about three years ago. H.E. Gnassingbe, president of the Republic of Togo, made a historical visit to Japan in June 2011, exactly three months after the great earthquake that devastated the northern region of the country.

That visit was to show sincere solidarity to the government and the people of Japan in the midst of a natural tragedy and to strengthen the long friendship that links the two countries.

I would like to seize this opportunity to once again express my sincere compassion, on behalf of my government and the Togolese people, to all those who lost their loved ones during that natural disaster.

On the eve of TICAD V, the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, I would like to reiterate the good will of my government in this highly guided initiative launched about 20 years ago.

My country remains very much convinced that the upcoming conference will be an important step toward the realization of sustainable and inclusive growth on the continent.