

Rwanda national day

Building and growing toward a brighter future

Charles Murigande
AMBASSADOR OF RWANDA

On July 1, 1962, Rwanda regained its independence from Belgian colonial rule. Unfortunately, the immediate post-independence governments pursued a colonial "divide and rule" policy that in 1994, resulted in one of the most brutal and rapid genocides. On July 4, 1994, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) under the leadership of H.E. President Paul Kagame stopped the genocide against Tutsis and liberated the country from the genocidal forces. Today therefore, we commemorate a double liberation of our country.

On this occasion, it is 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 government and people of Rwanda.

This double anniversary is always an opportunity for us Rwandans 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. However, we will not dwell on the wasted 32 years of the immediate post-independence period. We want to focus on the

exciting and inspiring journey we have traveled since 1994, when the RPF singlehandedly stopped the 1994 genocide, and brought back hope to the Rwandan people and to humanity.

In just 19 years, Rwanda has moved from hopelessness to hopefulness. Rwanda is not only a peaceful, stable and rehabilitated nation, but it is also a fast developing country with sustained high economic growth, stable inflation and exchange rates. Rwanda is a responsible global citizen, making highly appreciated contributions to world peace through various U.N. peacekeeping operations in Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, etc. Recent Gallup worldwide surveys have revealed that Rwanda tops the list of countries where citizens are most likely to feel safe and women likely to say they feel at ease walking alone at night. In 2009, Gallup ranked Rwandans sixth in the world in feeling optimistic about the future.

To nurture such a peaceful and hopeful society, the leadership of Rwanda determined the government should be close to the people and new economic opportunities should serve all Rwandans. Rwanda is today known to have one of the most efficient decentralized local governments. Local communities have been empowered to choose their development priorities and leaders to excute them. Women are playing their rightful political, social and economic roles. Women make up 56 percent of parliament's members and

Rwanda has achieved gender parity in many other sectors of life, especially in education.

In 2000, the government adopted a vision 2020 for the country's development that aims at transforming Rwanda into a middle-income economy with per capita GDP of \$900 (2012) from \$220 (2000). The economy has been growing at an average of 8 percent per year and by 2012, per capita income had reached \$644, showing that Rwanda is well on the way to achieving that vision.

This has been an inclusive growth that has translated into the direct improvement of daily lives of ordinary Rwandans across the country. Access to health and education expanded tremendously. Rwanda achieved universal health coverage, resulting in the sharp decline in infant and maternal mortalities. Rwanda has also achieved universal primary education (UPE) and is on the way to achieving universal secondary education (USE) by 2020. By investing about 10.2 percent of its budget in agriculture, Rwanda has achieved food security for its people. Just between 2006 and 2011, 1 million people were uplifted out of poverty. Rwanda is one of the few African countries that is likely to achieve most of the MDGs by 2015.

Vision 2020 sets out to build a private sector-led and knowl-



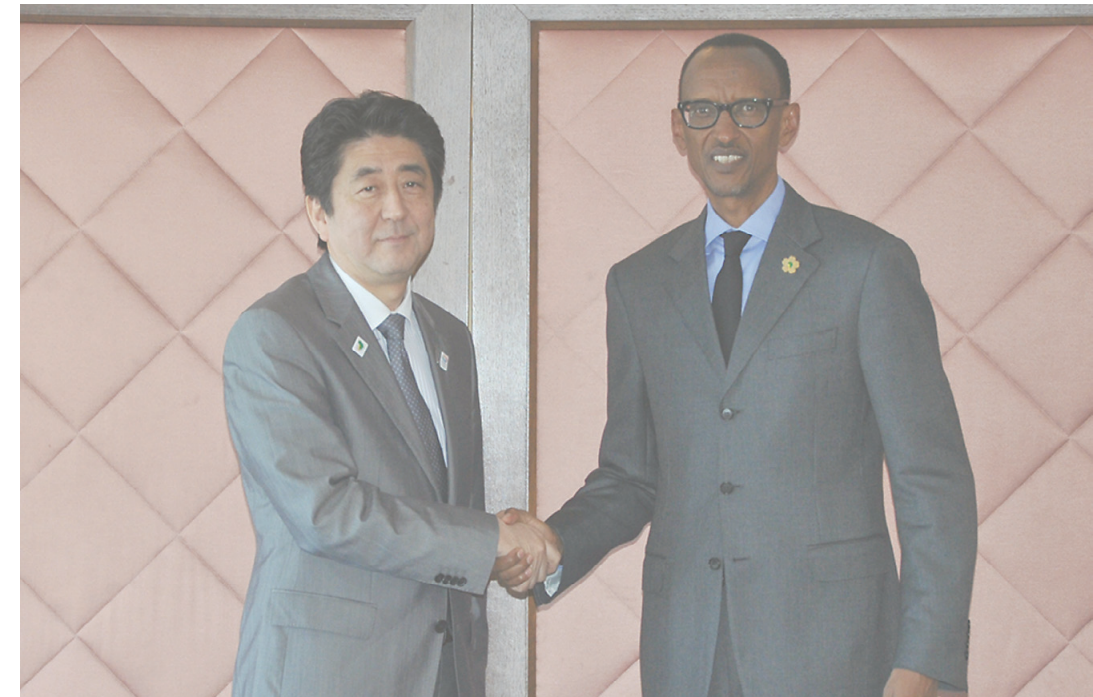
Building for the future: Kigali Convention Center is under construction. EMBASSY OF RWANDA

edge-based economy. Today Rwanda's business climate is considered as one of the best in Africa. According to the 2012 Doing Business Report, Rwanda is Africa's third easiest country to do business in and the first in East Africa. Similarly, the Economic Freedom of the World Report and the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report rank Rwanda as the third most economically free and most competitive country, respectively, in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result of this excellent business environment, FDI has been steadily increasing. There are untapped opportunities in infrastructure (energy, roads, railways, airports), agro-industries, mining, ICT and tourism.

Rwanda is one of the handful of African countries with a national optic fiber network backbone covering the entire country and linked to undersea cables. Last month Rwanda struck a \$140 million 4G internet deal

with KT Corp., a South Korean telecom firm, which will allow access to high-speed broadband for 95 percent of Rwandan citizens in three years. According to Jean Philbert Nsengiyumva, Rwandan minister for youth and ICT, this agreement with KT Corp. marks a major milestone in Rwanda's drive to become a modern, knowledge-based economy, and by expanding Rwanda's information infrastructure, it will help create jobs, support social progress and propel economic growth.

We take this opportunity to call upon members of the Japanese private sector to take advantage of Rwanda's conducive business environment, and use Rwanda as an entry point to the enlarged and potentially lucrative markets of the EAC (East African Community), COMESA (Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa) and CEP-GL (Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries). It also



Bilateral talks: President of Rwanda Paul Kagame and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe meet on June 2 in Yokohama on the sideline of the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V). CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

gives me pleasure to invite Japanese tourists to visit Rwanda, famously known as a "land of a thousand hills, a million smiles and the home of the famous Mountain Gorillas," and enjoy unique Rwandan hospitality.

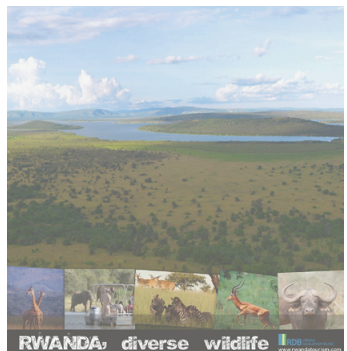
Though Rwanda faces enormous economic challenges, we have, nevertheless, made commendable strides on our road to development, and this has in turn created in us an unwavering confidence and strength that we shall overcome.

This confidence is not only

born of our resolve to achieve what other peoples have achieved, but it is also stems from the very cordial and friendly relations characterized by mutual understanding, support and respect that exist between Rwanda and other nations, especially Japan. We take this opportunity to thank the government and people of Japan for the support they have extended to us in our struggle for economic development. We salute the government of Japan for recently hosting a successful TICAD V and renew-

ing its unwavering commitment to Africa's development as demonstrated by the huge pledges made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Finally, we take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to various institutions, companies and individuals in Japan for their support and business engagements in Rwanda, and particularly to the management of the Zensho Group, Toyota Tsusho and Ataka Trading for sponsoring the publication of this article.



Natural attractions: Official posters feature Nyungwe National Park in the southwest Rwanda, which is home to a wide variety of animal species (left) and rich and unique Rwandan culture (right). RWANDA DEVELOPMENT BOARD



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to the People of
the Republic of Rwanda
on the 51st Anniversary
of the Independence
and 19th Anniversary
of the Liberation Day**

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