

Côte d'Ivoire independence day

Peace, security lead to greater development

Jérôme Klöh Weya
AMBASSADOR OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

On the occasion of the celebration of the 53rd anniversary of Côte d'Ivoire's National Day, I would like, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire H.E. Alassane Ouattara, the government and people of Côte d'Ivoire and on my own behalf, to extend my respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as the Imperial family, and offer them my fervent wishes of health and continuous happiness.

I convey also my greetings to the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and the friendly people of Japan.

In addition, I renew the sympathy and deep compassion of the Ivorian government and people to the government and people of Japan as well as the victims and persons who suffered from the Great East Japan Earthquake, the second anniversary of which we recently commemorated.

Furthermore, I greet my fellow citizens living in Japan including those residing in the other states under the jurisdiction of the embassy.

Finally, I take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to the government of Japan and the co-organizers of the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), which was a great success according to all observers, and in which President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire H.E. Ouattara, actively participated at the head of a large delegation.

My intervention will mainly focus on peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire, the recovery of the Ivorian economy along with the reconstruction of the country, as well as the state of the cooperation between Japan and Côte d'Ivoire.

Peace and security

First of all, I would like to reassure the friends and development partners of Côte d'Ivoire that peace and normalcy have returned to the country after a decade of crisis, thus enabling the government to carry out its priority actions such as the strengthening of security, the national reconciliation, the reconstruction and the economic recovery.

With regard to national reconciliation and social cohesion, Côte d'Ivoire is experiencing significant improvement. The process of the restoration of the proper functioning of the institutions of the republic has been completed with the coupled organization of free and transparent municipal and regional elections on April 21. The electoral cycle started with the election of the president of the republic in December 2010, followed by the legislative elections in 2011. The public administration and the judiciary as well are fully operational throughout the national territory.

The national reconciliation process progresses well, thanks notably to the continuation of consultations between the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the civil society, including the political parties.

All these concrete actions are well received by Côte d'Ivoire's development partners. Thus, beside the numerous economic prospecting missions, the country has seen the reopening of the office of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) on Dec. 12, 2012, following that of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) previously. I can also mention, among others, the inauguration of the factory of Ajinomoto Group in Côte d'Ivoire just a few months ago, on May 13, as well as the decision taken by the authorities of the African Development Bank (ADB) in May concerning the return to Abidjan, its permanent location, of the bank's headquarters, which had been temporarily relocated to Tunis, due to the



Strengthening ties: President of Côte d'Ivoire Alassane Ouattara and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shake hands during their meeting on May 31 in Yokohama on the occasion of the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V). EMBASSY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

prevailing sociopolitical unrest at that time in Côte d'Ivoire.

Economy

At the economic level, the resumption of economic activities following the post-election crisis has been stronger and faster than expected. The revival of confidence from economic operators is effective due to the normalization of the security situation and the efforts to build national peace and stability. Thus, after dropping to 4.7 percent in 2011, the growth rate was about 9.8 percent in 2012, supported by public investment and consumption recovery.

To ensure the financing of implementation of the National Development Plan (PND) 2012-2015, which constitutes the term of reference for the government's major actions for the benefit of the population should allow the country to have a sustainable and inclusive growth curve. Forecasted to 8.9 percent for 2013 and 9.8 percent for 2014, the growth rate of gross domestic product will be encouraged by the recovery of the oil and gas production as well as the increase in investment, itself spurred by the improvement of the business environment and the strengthening of public-private partnership.

The PND, a meeting of the consultative group for the mobilization of resources was organized on Dec. 4 and 5, 2012, in Paris. This meeting has been a great success, with financial commitments from development partners of Côte d'Ivoire amounting to ¥864 billion, more than double the funding expected. At this meeting, the priority projects of public-private partnership attracted the interest of international investors.

It is worth noting the remarkable participation of Japan through JICA at the meeting. This growth that the Ivorian government wants to be inclusive aims to increase access to employment, in particular for young people, and to improve the living conditions of the population.

To consolidate the recovery and maintain sustainable growth, the country is committed to continue its efforts aiming at a structural transformation, taking advantage of its important natural resources.

Indeed, the mining sector is booming in Côte d'Ivoire with very important discoveries of gold, iron, manganese as well as oil offshore.

Côte d'Ivoire has also a strong agricultural potential, especially being the world's leading producer of cocoa with 1,304,494 tons in 2012. The increase in the rate of transformation of agricultural production represents a priority for the Ivorian government in the upcoming years. The country ranks on the other hand third in Africa for coffee with 144,716 tons, the leader in Africa and world's No. 2 cashew nuts producer with 430,000 tons in 2012 (i.e., 18 percent of global volumes), and the largest exporter in the world. Côte d'Ivoire is also the first port of tuna in West Africa and leader of the fish products processing industries.

In addition, several industry sectors including education, health, tourism, infrastructure, housing as well as information communications technology need investments.

Bilateral relations

Japan and Côte d'Ivoire enjoy excellent relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries after Côte d'Ivoire's accession to independence in 1960.

Since then, Japan has never ceased to be alongside Côte d'Ivoire regardless of its internal situation. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate to the government and Japanese people the appreciation and gratitude of the government and people of Côte d'Ivoire for their loyalty and faithfulness in friendship.

The presence of President Ouattara at the head of a large delegation of Côte d'Ivoire and his effective involvement in the TICAD V meeting are a testimony of the excellence of these relationships. On this occasion, and during their bilateral meeting, President Ouattara and Prime Minister Abe reaffirmed their common vision for a world of peace and stability, resolutely turned toward development and progress.

Despite their excellent relations the trade volume between Côte d'Ivoire and Japan is low with regard to their respective enormous potential. Therefore, I consider the reopening of the office of JETRO in Abidjan as an expression of Japan's confidence in Côte d'Ivoire and a strong signal toward the Japanese businessmen, who I invite to appropriate Côte d'Ivoire's destination, where there is a very attractive investment code for industry and agro-processing industry, and to invest massively in the country.

I would like to conclude my message by addressing my sincere thanks and deep gratitude, on the one hand, to The Japan Times, which offers its pages on every anniversary date of the independence of Côte d'Ivoire and, on the other hand, to the partners of the embassy, such as Ajinomoto Co., Hotel Ibis Roppongi, Imperial Hotel, Mitsubishi Corp. and Tokyo Kankan Co., for their continuous support for the publication of these messages.



Economic growth: Above, the Central Business District, named Le Plateau, in Abidjan, the largest city in Côte d'Ivoire, is home to the headquarters of the Coffee and Cocoa Council (left), which is in charge of the country's major industry. EMBASSY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
on the 53rd Anniversary of
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