

## Gabon national day

## Emergence policy and march toward a better future

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF GABON

On Aug. 17, the 53rd anniversary of the Gabonese independence, a renewed special moment that The Japan Times offers to us for taking a look back at the policy of Emergence of the Gabonese Republic to look toward the future.



On this solemn occasion, we would like to renew, on behalf of the President of the Gabonese Republic H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, Prime Minister Raymond Ndong Sima, the government and the Gabonese people to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko our best wishes for happiness, health and long life. We do not fail to honor the rest of the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with his government, all the Japanese people and members of public institutions as well.

Let us not forget to give a fraternal and convivial thought to the small Gabonese community in Japan and gratitude to the countries of our jurisdiction for their tireless support.

The year 2013 rightly can be declared a very eventful year at both the national and international levels. Indeed, as early as this January, during the traditional ceremony of greetings to the Gabonese president, the focus was on the country's development process.

Economically, President Ali Bongo Ondimba reaffirmed the important position that he gives to the private sector, which is expected to play a full part in the creation of the nation's wealth.

Thus, emphasizing the creation of 6,000 jobs for the Gabonese workers in the domain of construction and public works, the head of state points out the

private sector's expected role in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

On the political level, President Ali Bongo called for the appropriation of values that can be leverages of step forwards to achieve Gabon's development horizon for 2013.

For this to happen, three targets should be reached:

- the creation of the National Democracy Council (CND) as a genuine tool of political dialogue;
- the implementation of practical arrangements for biometric technologies;
- and the in-depth reflection on the functioning of political organizations for their contribution to the expression of universal suffrage and to the life of the nation.

As regards the social aspect, the head of state stressed the creation of a "strong nation" that responds to his project to make Gabon an emerging country. A rich country as a strong nation depends on the equality in opportunity so that a large number of people can access private property, education and the benefits of growth. Also, projects for social housing, urbanization of cities, road construction, should be carried out and justice should prevail for everyone.

The nation engages in the promotion of universal health insurance provided by the CNAMGS (National Health Insurance and Social Guarantee Office), while compensation for young mothers illustrates the output from this solidarity. In this way, President Ali Bongo has also announced that elderly persons should be taken care of with benefits from a "Minimum Basket for the Elderly."

#### Open to the world

##### • International emergence

Faithful to the role of mediator that the president inherited from his predecessor, Omar Bongo



Ali Bongo Ondimba, president of the Gabonese Republic

Ondimba, Gabon continues to involve herself on the diplomatic scene in Africa and internationally.

##### • Pan-African organizations

Strongly involved at the Pan-African level, Gabon is a member of several organizations on the continental and regional levels playing an active role for the promotion of peace, conflict resolutions and economic integration.

##### • Committed to Africa

Member of the African Union; member of the AU Peace and Security Council (the first Peace and Security Summit Council

summit took place in Libreville on Jan. 10, 2005); member of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) (the treaty for its creation was signed in Libreville in October 1983).

##### • United Nations organizations

For the third time in its history, Gabon was elected as a non-permanent member of U.N. Security Council for the period 2010-2011.

During the mandate, Gabon chaired the UNSC twice. During the second time in June 2011, a resolution was adopted to give an international answer for stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS around the world.

This resolution was highlighting the important role that the U.N. peacekeeping operation can play in response to the epidemic.

Gabon also aided the adoption by the U.N. General Assembly on Dec. 21, 2010, of Resolution 65/189, which established International Widows' Day for every June 23.

The resolution invites the U.N. member states, U.N. bodies, other competent international organizations and civil society as well to raise public awareness regarding the situation of widows and their children all over the world.

##### • Diverse partnerships

Since he came to power, President Ali Bongo made several official visits to foreign countries so as to promote Gabon's economic openness, present business opportunities for foreign investors and build cooperative relations with new partners.

These various visits to South Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Italy, Japan, Morocco, Switzerland, Australia gave rise to the signing of several agreements with Asian, American or European partners for an amount of over \$4 billion in the wood, ag-

riculture and infrastructure sectors.

#### Tourism assets

In addition to traditional tourism and ecotourism developed in the 13 national parks, Gabon has become a leading tourist destination for ornithological tourism after the discovery of rare bird species.

In fact, in comparison to other well-established destinations such as South Africa, Gambia and Kenya, better-known for their wildlife and where the tourist infrastructures have exist for a long time, bird watching is a recent activity in Gabon.

The preservation and development program of ECOFAC not only contributed to the construction of Lopé Hotel before the Lopé site became a national park in 2002, but also to the training of guide staff, which enabled the establishment of a nature observation station for visitors.

Today, there are some internet sites informing the animal/bird-lover community on the species observable throughout Gabon, from Nyonié in front of the estuary in Libreville, Léconi on the Bateke plateaus to Setté Cama in the south.

#### Bilateral cooperation

We can say that the bilateral relations between Japan and Gabon remain very good and are properly evolving. Commercial exchanges mainly consist, on one hand, of Japan's importation of oil, lumber and manganese, and in return, Gabon imports from Japan machinery, motor vehicles and appliances.

Japan participates actively in Gabon's development with grants for small-scale local projects, for example, equipment for and repair of public schools in Ozoougué and Plein Ciel Bissegué, and specialized equipment for Nkembo Hospital, National Gerontology and Geriatric Center. Japan is also present in the field of forest inventory work and fisheries with young volunteers from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

#### TICAD V

The fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), which took place from June 1 to 3 in Yokohama, determined a new approach in the relations between Japan and the African states.

In the presence of 39 heads of state and government, the bilateral and multilateral cooperation of Japan and Africa was reinforced. Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba actively participated into the Conference, making constructive proposals for his country, following the notion of "Blue Gabon" for protection of the marine fauna and flora, as well as the appeals made to the African countries for transformation (added value) of most of the raw materials on the continent before exportation.

At the opening of the Summit on Prime Minister Abe showed the Japanese government's recognition that Africa needs private investments, public-private cooperation and infrastructures. In this regard, support of ¥3.2



Ornithological tourism: Gabon is home to many rare birds, among them five must-see species: (clockwise from above right) black-headed bee-eater (*Merops breweri*), rosy bee-eater (*Merops malimbicus*), red-headed picathartes (*Picathartes oreas*), Congo moor chat (*Mymecocichla tholloni*) and African river martin (*Pseudochelidon eurystomina*). EMBASSY OF GABON

trillion was proposed to cover various areas such as official development assistance, business insurance, infrastructures and human resources development.

Advocating a more dynamic region, hand in hand, a bright future awaits Africa and brighter will be its partnership with Japan.

Through this common feeling during TICAD V, the different delegations retained in the Yokohama Declaration 2013 and Yokohama Action Plan 2013-2017, the following key points:

- recognizing the outcomes of the TICAD process over its 20 years;
- renewed commitment to maintain the partnership in the TICAD framework for African development support;
- acknowledgement of TICAD's need to intensify its promotional efforts and those for transforming growth, that is resilient and continent-wide, so that

the advantages can be shared by all citizens more largely, more fairly and more sustainably.

We would conclude our address that Gabon, confident in her policy of Emergence and conscious of her own potentials and opportunities, expects positive effects of this new framework of cooperation with Japan and with all other development partners.

Convinced by the rightness of

its ambitions, the relevance of its strategy and the quality of its actions, more and more countries, enterprises and investors are deciding to support and accompany Gabon's development by means of investment.

With a positive balance in the oil, energy, water resources and lumber sectors, Gabon is a land of welcome and opportunities that has huge potential and enormous advantages.

#### Congratulations

to the People of the Gabonese Republic  
on the Occasion of the 53rd Anniversary  
of Their Independence



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Future: A rendering of a development project in Libreville, the capital and largest city of Gabon. The city has grown rapidly and houses nearly half the Gabonese people. EMBASSY OF GABON

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