

Zimbabwe independence day

Japan supports efforts of young growing nation

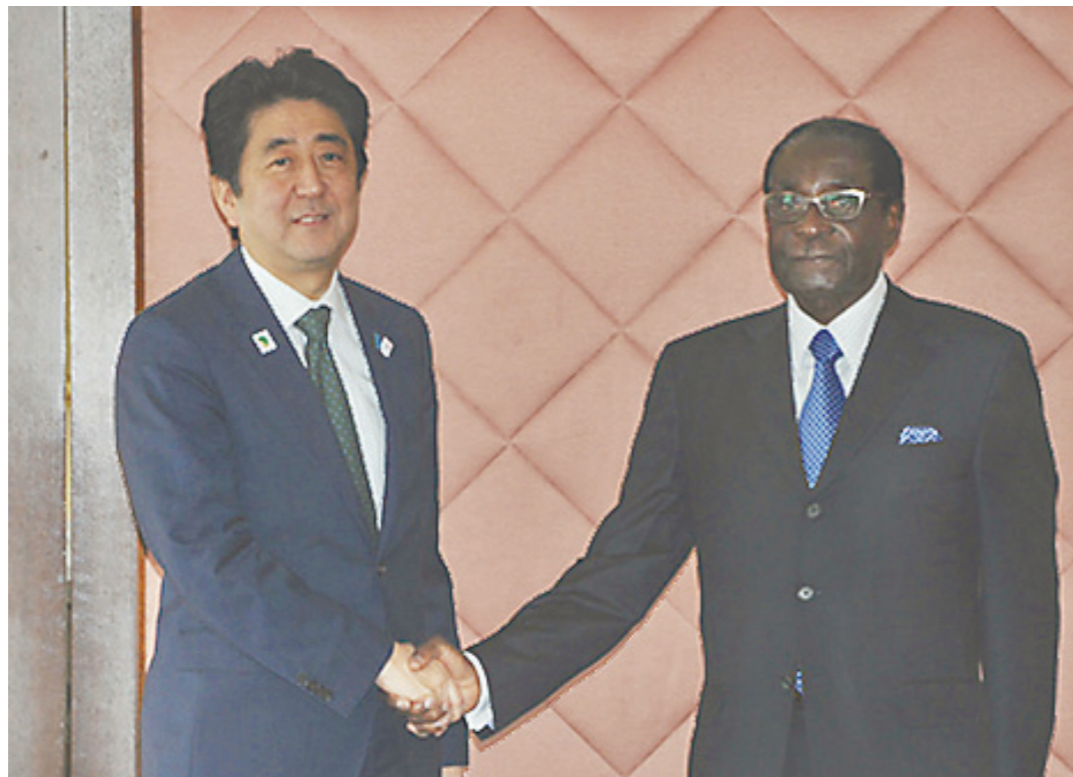
Stuart H. Comberbach
AMBASSADOR OF ZIMBABWE

Today, the Republic of Zimbabwe marks the 34th anniversary of its accession to sovereign independence; the momentous day, in 1980, when, after a draining and bloody, but ultimately successful war against an entrenched colonial settler regime, Zimbabweans assumed full control of their destiny.

Japan was one of the very first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the newly independent nation of Zimbabwe and has maintained an embassy in the capital of Harare for the past 34 years. Notwithstanding the many challenges which have confronted Zimbabwe in terms of its somewhat complicated relationship with the former colonial power and a number of other Western capitals, Japan has remained a steadfast friend, opting to follow a path of quiet diplomacy rather than resorting to the often shrill rhetoric of others.

During the turbulent politics of the mid- to late 2000s as Zimbabweans strove to correct lingering colonial-era imbalances and as Western nations, in general, sought to isolate and punish Zimbabwe to mold our country and its policies according to their own preferences, Japan opted instead for a policy of constructive engagement, always focused on providing support to those who needed it the most. This balance and consistency has always been deeply appreciated by the government and people of Zimbabwe who view Japan with respect and a genuine affection.

Throughout our relationship, Japanese support has been directed across a wide variety of both economic and social development areas — the most notable, perhaps, being in infrastructure development, with the construction of the Chirundu Bridge and a one-stop border post between Zimbabwe and Zambia, a crucial component of the broader north-south development corridor. Others include the



President of Zimbabwe Robert G. Mugabe meets with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on June 1 in Yokohama on the sidelines of the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V). CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

extensive digitalization program across our telecommunications network and the development and expansion of a number of both large- and medium-scale irrigation projects aimed at boosting agricultural production in rural Zimbabwe.

Long-standing support programs covering maternal health, HIV/AIDS, education and sanitation are ongoing and continue to be effective in terms of delivery and impact across the targeted communities.

The dispatch, toward the end of last year, of experts to work at various ministry headquarters in Harare provides a basis for the identification of potential additional projects and programs and the future expansion of JICA operations across various development sectors — specifically health, education and agriculture.

Zimbabwe's strategic position within the heart of the 15-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) group, its agricultural potential, its vast and largely untapped mineral wealth and its well-educated people render it an attractive and viable investment destination. Steadily emerging from a decade or more of highly negative

media coverage — much of it exaggerated and politically motivated from well beyond our borders — our country is once again generating considerable interest among international investors, specifically in the mining and mining development sectors. In this regard, it is pleasing to note the steadily increasing interest and engagement of the Japanese private sector in our country and in the broader Southern African region — SADC — as a whole.

The conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC) and the 5-year extension of JOGMEC's Botswana-based remote-sensing project for Southern African nations, provides a further conduit for increasing Japanese private sector interest and engagement in the joint development of Zimbabwe's vast mining potential — especially in strategic minerals such as platinum, chromium, nickel and high-grade coking coal.

The removal of European sanctions on Zimbabwe's diamond trade has cleared the way for further foreign investment and significantly enhanced production of both

industrial and gem quality stones from our country. The recent discovery of additional deposits will certainly see Zimbabwe consolidating its position as one of the world's top diamond producers — along with our Southern African neighbors Botswana, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa.

Increasing Japanese private sector engagement in the Republic of Mozambique and Japanese government support for the development of the Nacala Corridor will provide easier access for a number of Southern African countries to Mozambique's deep-water port of Nacala, facilitating the export of minerals to Asian destinations. This augurs well for our collective future as the community of Southern African nations, in a gradually strengthening partnership with Japan and, more broadly, in the further consolidation of SADC-Asia commercial and economic links.

Twelve out of fifteen SADC member states participated in last June's TICAD V Conference at head of state or government level, including H.E. Robert Mugabe, president of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

In January, President

Mugabe was elected as first vice chair of the African Union. In August, he will assume the Chairmanship of SADC, one of 8 African Regional Economic Communities (REC's) — the building blocks toward an eventual continent-wide African Economic Community.

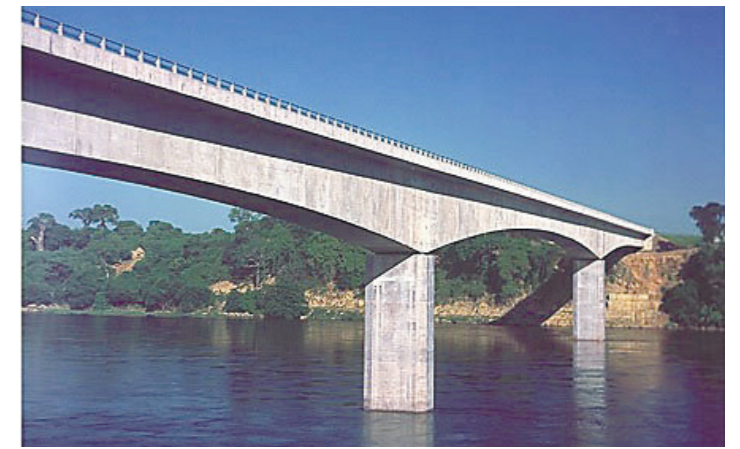
Among the many positive outcomes of the Conference was a commitment by Japan to work more closely with these REC's in order to support the process of regional integration underway across the entire continent, and to align the TICAD process more closely with Africa's own continental development blueprints.

SADC is fortunate to have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Government of Japan — the first such document between Japan and any of the African REC's — which identifies a number of priority areas for closer cooperation under TICAD, including infrastructure development, agricultural production and capacity building across the board.

As incoming chair of SADC, and as the first vice chair of the African Union, Zimbabwe will certainly play a role in pursuing a further strengthening of cooperation between Japan and Africa's Regional Economic Communities, and in encouraging Japan, at both government and private sector levels, to commit itself even more actively in the years ahead to building the mutually beneficial, strategic partnership we all wish to see between Japan and the continent of Africa as a whole.



(Clockwise from above) The Japan-funded Mazoe Earth Satellite Station near the capital Harare is Zimbabwe's primary international telecommunication gateway; opened in 2002, the second Chirundu Bridge across the Zambezi River between Zimbabwe and Zambia was built by Kajima Corp.; the Nyakomba Irrigation Development Project is supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. EMBASSY OF ZIMBABWE



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