

DR Congo national day

DR Congo celebrating their nation's independence

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On this occasion, the Congolese people will pay and renew their honor to the Fathers of our Nation. Among these founding fathers are the First President H.E. Joseph Kasavubu and the First Prime Minister Patrice Emery Lumumba (Martyr of Independence) and many others. Additionally, on behalf of the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on my own behalf, I extend my congratulations to all my fellow Congolese living in Japan and wish them happiness, health and success during their stay in the beautiful and friendly country of Japan.

On this happy day, I have the honor and pleasure to hereby extend the warm greetings with deepest respect from the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo H.E. Joseph Kabila Kabange, the government and all Congolese people to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, as well as to all distinguished members of the Imperial family, members of the government and to all the people of Japan.

The celebration of our 54th anniversary of independence is a wonderful moment to assess the progress of development in many fields and on bilateral relations with our partners in general and with

Japan in particular.

This year, we will celebrate the anniversary with joy and in wholehearted unity because the conflict, which lasted for many years in the eastern region of our country, is now over. It is now a new era of peace and stability in the eastern region as it rebuilds. The Congolese people under the new leadership of President Kabange will work hard for the development of eastern region of the country. This is why we are inviting the Japanese private sector to seize opportunities to invest in the DR Congo because of the good conditions, including:

- A new investment code, intended to favor and secure investments, and others laws aimed at favoring business development and securing investment
- A huge market of almost around 80 million people in the heart of Africa
- Many natural resources, land and opportunities
- A promising economic situation with attractive customs, fiscal and parafiscal incentives for investors
- An abundant skilled and cheap labor pool
- No nationalization or expropriation and freedom to transfer dividends abroad

Our hope is for Japanese private sector development in the DR Congo and elsewhere in Africa. We would like to see Japanese companies launching businesses in the DR Congo to promote private sector development and serve as models for enterprise activities in Africa. We would like to see collaboration and joint investment with African companies along with

the technical assistance of Japan.

As a reminder, the Congolese conflict has been over minerals because these can be found all over the country. Some of them are silver, bauxite, beryl, cadmium, cassiterite, cobalt, chromium, coltan tentale (used in electronics and telecommunications), niobium, copper, diamond, iron ore, manganese, monazite, nickel, gold, phosphate, pyrochlorine, spodumene, uranium and zinc. Some of these minerals are partially exploited, while some are under industrial exploitation and others remain untapped.

Other opportunities can be found in the agriculture sector, where the Japanese private sector can also invest in crops, including food, cotton, tobacco, palm, hevea and others.

With the agriculture and mineral fields, it is possible to establish private-private partnerships for land management and to create industries between the Japanese private sector and the Congolese private sector.

On the bilateral side with Japan, relations between Japan and my country date back to before my country's Independence when Japan opened a Consular Office in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), the Capital of Congo.

When my country became independent in 1960, the two countries established diplomatic relations and have cooperated in many fields, while today our relationship remains stable and strong.

Since then, the Japanese government has assisted my country in many fields — both

during and after the conflict — through ODA, which went to education, health, infrastructure, police training, election preparation and the U.N. Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR of the Congo. There has also been support in criminal justice through the training of Congolese experts (JICA program) at the National Institute of Professional Preparation.

There has also been the economic infrastructure development of the Matadi Bridge project; a roads infrastructure project in Kinshasa (Route de Poids Lourdes); a water infrastructure project; and the construction of a JICA center and medical school in Kinshasa. Additionally, a primary school was built in Kinshasa and a Japanese-Congolese Culture Center was established by Keio

University students.

Since about 1978, Japanese private investment has been active in the mining company SODIMIZA in the Katanga region.

Today, the Japanese private sector is welcome to expand investment in the Katanga region or in other Congolese regions, with their extensive potential natural resources.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has many forests that represent 46 percent of Africa's tropical forests (128,000,000 hectares) with 700 tree species. Congolese forests represent an opportunity for the industrial commercialization of wood.

As Japan needs both minerals for its manufacturing and timber for construction, there are investment opportunities for the Japanese private sector

all across my country.

Last year, my country participated in the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in Yokohama with a large delegation headed by our minister of foreign affairs. This is representative of my country's interest in our relationship with Japan.

The success of TICAD V and the participation of many African heads of state and the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Africa further consolidated the positive Japan-Africa relations. In French there is a proverb, "*C'est dans les difficultes que l'on connait un vrai ami*," or "It is in difficult times that one knows their true friends." Japan came to the aid of Africa when the international community abandoned our continent during difficult times. It is in this spirit that Japan created the TICAD forum in 1993.

Africa urgently needs en-

ergy to lift its people out of poverty and deliver sustainable development. This is the reason why, in 1978, the government of the DRC and some world partners decided to build a power grid across Africa that will spur the continent's industrial economic development.

The Big Inga project could produce many megawatts of electricity (over twice the power of the Three Gorges Dam in China and more than a third of the total electricity currently produced in Africa.) The Japanese private sector is

welcome to contribute toward this INGA mega-project.

Some African countries are already on board with this project. The Republic of South Africa signed an agreement with the Congolese government for the supply of electricity for its industries (2500 mw). Nigeria, with 170 million citizens, has huge energy needs and is also in negotiations with the Congo government.

In conclusion, I hope the Japanese private sector will join others countries in investing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Congratulations to the People of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the 54th Anniversary of Their Independence

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