

Côte d'Ivoire independence day

Making Côte d'Ivoire an emerging country by 2020

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AMBASSADOR OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The celebration of the 55th anniversary of Côte d'Ivoire's Independence Day gives me the pleasant opportunity to address once again the friends and development partners of Côte d'Ivoire, through the pages of The Japan Times.



First of all, I would like, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, H.E. Mr. Alassane Ouattara, the government and the 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 continued happiness.

I would also like to express my sincere greetings to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and the friendly people of Japan.

I also salute my fellow countrymen living in Japan as well as those residing in the other countries within the diplomatic district of the Embassy, namely Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

"Making Côte d'Ivoire an emerging country by 2020," is the stated ambition of President H. E. Mr. Alassane Ouattara, on his accession to the presidency in 2010. To achieve this goal, the Ivorian government initiated a comprehensive development strategy titled "National Development Plan 2012-2015." This plan is the reference framework into which all the major actions of the government fit.

Sociopolitical situation
With regard to the sociopolitical situation, the government has undertaken reforms in the

security sector, as well as the restructuring and modernization of the defense and security forces. All these actions led to the normalization of the sociopolitical and security situation. As a result, Côte d'Ivoire has become an attractive destination with various international institutions and regional head offices returning to Abidjan. These include, among others, the African Development Bank, UNESCO and Japanese companies such as Marubeni Corp. and Itochu Corp.

Moreover, the consistent "policy of the outstretched hand" of the head of state to opposition parties, as well as the free exercise by all political parties of their activities throughout the country, have improved the political situation ahead of the presidential elections scheduled for October.

Socioeconomic situation
Regarding the state of the Ivorian economy, over the last three years Côte d'Ivoire has experienced strong, sustainable and inclusive growth at an average rate of 9 percent.

With a view toward enabling the Ivorian population to benefit from this growth, the government decided to improve the purchasing power of households by increasing and unfreezing civil servants' salaries in May following minimum wage increase in 2014. Additionally to guarantee farm gate price increases, or maintenance of former prices where necessary, for growers of the majority of agricultural products, including coffee, cotton, cashews and cocoa, of which Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer.

The government also continues to improve public finances by streamlining public expenditures and optimizing revenues. To strengthen good governance, the government has adopted a Public Finance Transparency Code. An illustrative example of this public



H.E. Mr. President Alassane Ouattara inaugurates a drinking water plant in Bonoua, in the South of Côte d'Ivoire.
EMBASSY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

finance improvement is the extension of the three-year Economic and Financial Program (2011-2014) with the International Monetary Fund until the end of 2015.

In order to boost the private sector, the government has implemented relevant structural and sectorial reforms with the aim of creating the best institutional and legal framework to promote both national and foreign private investment. Furthermore, the government places particular emphasis on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the adoption of a law on na-

tional policy for the promotion of SMEs in March 2014.

In the energy sector, many projects have been undertaken to increase and improve production and distribution of electricity and gas. Thus, significant investments have been made, notably in the hydroelectric domain with the construction of the 275 MW hydroelectric dam in Soubré in the southeastern part of the country.

Concerning information and communication technologies, 7,000 km of fiber optic cable will be operational this year. This fiber optic cable will ensure full coverage for the

country and will be coupled with the connection of 1,000 localities through CDMA technology. With all this investment, this sector, with about 20 million cellular subscribers and representing 7 percent of the GDP, is expected to create many jobs while supporting the modernization of the Ivorian economy and society.

Côte d'Ivoire is well known for its strong reliance on agriculture, which represents 70 percent of export revenues, employs more than 60 percent of the workforce and contributes over 30 percent to the GDP.

In order to bring the current

processing rate of all agricultural products from 30 percent to at least 50 percent by 2020, Côte d'Ivoire adopted a National Agricultural Investment Program in 2012. This program constitutes the reference framework for a comprehensive investment policy in this sector. One of its aims is to make Ivorian agriculture efficient and competitive in terms of production cost and quality with a view to meeting the demand of the domestic, sub-regional and international market.

As an illustration of its agricultural performance, Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest

producer of cocoa (1.75 million tons in 2014) and colanuts (80,000 tons in 2012), the largest African producer of latex (317,346 tons in 2014) and bananas (292,738 tons in 2014) and the world's largest exporter of cashews (estimated 2015 production of 635,000 tons).

Besides the processing of the agricultural products, the diversification of national production in the field of raw materials also includes the exploitation of the untapped natural resources. In the mining sector, Côte d'Ivoire also has an abundance of unexploited reserves, including more than 500 tons of gold, 4 billion tons of iron, 260 million tons of nickel, 40 million tons of copper, 1.2 billion tons of bauxite and 5 million tons of manganese. Additionally, the country boasts 145 tons of columbite-tantalite, more than 5 million carats of diamonds, as well as palladium and scandium reserves.

To improve people's living conditions, the government has implemented a multisectorial program aimed at providing access to safe water, health care and social welfare. In the health and social welfare sector, the government has developed a social welfare strategy, which takes into account universal health coverage (Couverture Maladie Universelle).

The government also is improving the studying and living conditions of students with the construction, reform and re-equipping of several schools and improving university infrastructure.

As to the environment, sanitation and restoration of hygienic conditions, the government has set new environmental management guidelines to enable all cities and towns of Côte d'Ivoire to profit from the minimum benefits required for the establishment of a healthy and pleasant living environment. The efforts undertaken to that end include, among others, a ban on plastic bags, cleaning the Bay of Cocody and other bays, as well as household waste management.

The objective of the plastic bag ban is to curb the adverse effects of such bags on health, the environment and people's lives. Alongside this measure, collection and recovery chains have been created as part of a partnership involving the government, the private sector and the municipalities of Côte d'Ivoire.

The cleaning of Cocody Bay

is already underway and will be integrated into a more comprehensive approach for the development of economic activities, including hotels, tourism facilities and water sports.

A new removal and recovery system of solid and assimilated household waste has been implemented into the District of Abidjan, taking into account public awareness of ecological activities.

Finally, in the tourism sector, the government is working to attract foreign visitors to Côte d'Ivoire. In the same vein, domestic tourism will be increasingly integrated into Ivorians' leisure habits. In this regard, the government has started upgrading various touristic accommodations to international standards and started construction on a number of large and medium-sized luxury hotels.

Bilateral relations

Japan and Côte d'Ivoire enjoy excellent cooperation and Japan's support to Côte d'Ivoire, covers several fields. These include capacity building of the police and judiciary for the restoration of a peaceful and stable society and support for the restoration of basic social services such as health services, education and safe water.

Additionally, Japan has supported economic development to consolidate the foundations for national and subregional economic growth. These include the development of the urban infrastructure of Abidjan, the construction of the Abidjan corridor within the regional framework of ECOWAS, the expansion of Port of Abidjan and the promotion of industries with high-growth potential. Japan has also assisted in the construction of a viaduct for the realization of the "Great Abidjan" master urban development plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate to the government and people of Japan the recognition and gratitude of the Ivorian government and people for this mark of friendship.

I will conclude by expressing my gratitude and sincere thanks to Japanese companies and industrial groups, which generously sponsored the Embassy this year for the organization of Côte d'Ivoire's Independence Day. These are, among others, in alphabetical order: Ajinomoto Co., Marubeni Corporation, Mitsubishi Corp., Mitsui & Co. and Tokyo Kankan Co.



Container terminal of the Port of Abidjan, the second largest port in Sub-Saharan Africa
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Mineral potentials map of Côte d'Ivoire
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to the People of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
on the 55th Anniversary of Their Independence

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