

South Africa National Day

A celebration honoring the diversity of our national identity

Beryl R. Sisulu
AMBASSADOR OF SOUTH AFRICA

On this day 22 years ago, significant winds of change swept across South Africa, when all South Africans participated in the first democratic elections. We mark this significant occasion annually on this day, April 27, as our National Day. As we celebrate our National Day today, we do so within the theme of highlighting our national identity, which is at the heart of what makes us truly South African.

Famously known as the Rainbow Nation, South Africa is a racially, linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous society. Indeed the social history of its people — from the early inhabitants of the Khoisan and African people, to the Dutch, English and Indian inhabitants — are all a reflection of this diversity. It is this heterogeneity that we, as South Africans celebrate today, and which is a source of our pride. Such pride in our diversity is reflected in the motto on our Coat of Arms, *!KE E: /XARRA //KE*, which means "diverse people unite," and is written in the Khoisan language of the /Xam people (Abathwa).

In celebration of our united diversity the government of the Republic of South Africa launched the National Identity Campaign this year on Feb. 4. The campaign forms part of the government's Nation Building and Social Cohesion campaign. Specific programs of the Social Cohesion campaign include promotion of singing the national anthem in our public schools, including installing the national flag and reciting the preamble of the constitution. As a people, we are socially diverse, yet are united by our love for our country and our flag.

We have a number of international friends and are members of various international organizations such as the U.N., Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Commonwealth, G-20 and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The Board of Directors of the New Development Bank, which was created by the BRICS group of countries, recently approved a new set of loans totaling \$811 million in support of 2,370 MW of renewable energy capacity, which will be distributed in tranches. This is indeed a significant development for us and our international partners.

As we continue to celebrate our unity in diversity we are proud to say that we have a relationship with Japan that spans over many, many years; thus I would like to highlight some achievements of our bilateral relationship with Japan over the past year.

The prominent highlight of the past year was the working visit by the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa, in August, which further solidified the warm bilateral relations between South Africa and Japan. As the Embassy of the Republic

of South Africa in Japan we look forward to further engagements with the government of Japan on significant outcomes of the deputy president's working visit, particularly regarding the training of South African artisans. As a rapidly industrializing country, artisanal skills are in high demand in South Africa, hence the relevance and significance of the artisan training program. As a country, we firmly believe that the artisan training program will greatly contribute to national efforts of job creation and skills development of our people.

Another significant outcome of the deputy president's working visit was our willingness to work with our Japanese interlocutors within the fuel cell industry. As a country well-endowed with significant platinum deposits, among others, South Africa is a suitable partner for Japan. As a country possessing the requisite research and development knowledge within this sector, our collaboration with Japan represents a good relationship that can yield mutually beneficial outcomes for both countries.

The past year had a number of high-level visits, in which various members of our cabinet visited Japan: In his capacity as Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Minister Pravin Gordhan attended the Third U.N. World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (UNWCDRR) in Sendai; in his capacity as Minister of Mineral Resources, Advocate Ngaoko Ramathodi attended the Japan-Africa Mining and Resources Business Seminar and co-chaired the Second Japan-Africa Ministerial Meeting for Resource Development in Tokyo; Deputy Minister of Transport, Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga, participated in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) World Maritime Day Parallel Event in Tokyo and Yokohama; and Minister Naledi Pandor attended the annual meeting of the Science and Technology in Society Forum (STS Forum) in Kyoto.

As our third-largest trading partner we value our trade relations with Japan. The recent four-day visit to South Africa by the Sub-Saharan Africa Committee of Keidanren is a further testament of improving economic relations between Japan and South Africa. There are over 140 Japanese companies doing business in South Africa that employ more than 150,000 people.

Recent developments further attest to the increasing trade relations between South Africa and Japan: Toyota opened a new production line in South Africa for the production of Quantum minibuses, which are vital to the local economy and transportation of millions of South Africans on their daily transportation needs; Mitsubishi Hitachi Power Systems continues to contribute to South Africa's energy needs by assisting in improving the output capacity of Unit 6 of the Medupi Power Station and continues to contribute in improving the output capacity of Kusile Power Station as well. In addition to Mitsubishi Hitachi



Above: Cape Town's Table Mountain; Right: A bustling South African Market SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

Power Systems, Sumitomo Corp. recently entered the South African economy through the establishment of its office in South Africa. Over and above Mitsubishi Hitachi Power Systems' and Sumitomo Corp.'s participation in South Africa's domestic economy, 12 Japanese companies established representative offices in the country. As a country we truly welcome and are appreciative of these significant economic developments. It is clear that our political and economic bilateral relations are strong and are increasing in magnitude.

Our economic bilateral relationship with Japan also extends to the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector. Within this sector our conversation with Japan has been advancing to include dialogue on food value change and reciprocating market access for fresh produce as observed with the advancing discussions for cross exports. Moreover,

Japan is our largest destination for our grapefruit, which is available in markets from June to November annually.

This year will be a significant juncture in relations between Japan and Africa as this will be the inaugural year that the summit of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) will be convened on African soil in the history of the TICAD process. As we prepare for the summit in Nairobi, Kenya, South Africa looks forward to working with Japan and other African countries in marking this significant achievement in the TICAD process.

Within the TICAD process we extend our appreciation to the government of Japan for hosting 49 of our young citizens as they complete their master's degrees through the African Business Education for the Youth Initiative (ABE Initiative). It is my humble wish that Japan



will host more South African students, who, upon completion of their studies, will return home to fill the skills gap.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the government of the Republic of South Africa and its people, to extend condolences to the government and people of Japan for the deadly destruction caused by the recent earthquakes in Kumamoto and Oita prefectures.

We share the pain and loss of the loved ones, their homes and property, and our thoughts and prayers go to all the affected families. We also wish the injured a speedy recovery.

Friends of South Africa join us as we celebrate our National Day today through our united diversity as we look forward to further enhancing our political and economic bilateral relations with Japan.

Congratulations
on the 22nd Anniversary
of the Freedom Day
of the Republic of South Africa

from the president and staff of
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