

Madagascar National Day

An active leader in regional integration

Rosette Rasoamanarivo
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF
MADAGASCAR

June 26 sees Madagascar celebrate its 56th Anniversary of Independence. For this memorable occasion, and in my capacity of Charge d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of the Republic of Madagascar to Japan, I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes of the people and government of Madagascar to their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial family, as well as the government and people of Japan.

I am thankful to The Japan Times for once again providing this great opportunity to share our national day commemoration. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all our Japanese partners and friends for their sustained support and heartfelt congratulatory messages.

On this auspicious occasion, let me congratulate all Malagasy residents and diaspora in Japan while expressing to them my gratitude for their enthusiastic and patriotic contributions for the success of the events of "Madagascar Week 2016," which was hosted by the embassy from June 17 to June 26. The event allowed us to happily mark this year's commemoration under the theme of "Madagascar prosperous, a shared objective," with our growing number of Japanese partners and friends. Special mention is also deserved for the success of the first-ever "Madagascar Festival in Japan," which was held at Arisugawa Park last October, thanks to our strengthened cooperation with Tokyo's Minato Ward.

As is the case every year, this is a good opportunity for me to share with the readers

some of the latest updates on Madagascar and the status of our friendly relationship with Japan.

After the return of constitutional normalcy to Madagascar, I am delighted to say that Madagascar is fully back to assume its role in the concert of nations. Our diplomatic priority efforts in recent years have been focusing on the role that Madagascar should play in the region, first toward effective regional integration and second for ensuring international engagement for peace and stability in accordance with the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace adopted in a 1971 U.N. General Assembly resolution.

Looking back on 2015, Madagascar had the privilege to preside over the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), which comprises the island states of the southwest Indian Ocean (Comoros, La Reunion, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles). Under Madagascar leadership, IOC member states adopted the designation of Madagascar as the "Granary of the Indian Ocean" to ensure food security in this region. In addition, in terms of maritime security issues under the Regional Maritime Security Program (MASE), an agreement has been endorsed for the establishment of the Regional Center of Fusion of Maritime Information in Antananarivo, Madagascar's capital. Given the geopolitical importance of the Indian Ocean region, this international center in Madagascar will work in cooperation with all east African states.

This year, with the mobilization of all its citizens, Madagascar has the great honor and challenge to successfully host two international summit meetings. These are the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) summit and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) summit.

During the 19th COMESA summit on the 18th and 19th

of October, delegations comprised of heads of state and government leaders from about 19 nations are expected to gather in Madagascar to hold discussions under the theme of "export support for sustainable development." This will be a good regional platform for public and private policy dialogues aiming at reinforcing regional integration of this large market that has more than \$650 billion in GDP and a population of over 460 million.

During the 16th IOF summit on Nov. 26th and 27th, Madagascar will be hosting delegations of heads of state and government leaders from 80 countries with the discussions focused on the theme of "shared growth and responsible development: the conditions for the stability of the world and Francophone

world." Madagascar would like to introduce at this international meeting crucial issues of common interest to facilitate decision-making that could have a real impact on the people's lives. In regards to this, Madagascar Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Beatrice Atallah said: "On behalf of the history that binds Madagascar and La Francophonie, this summit is a mark of recognition for the efforts of Madagascar. We hope that this event can bring the message of La Francophonie to provide solutions to major challenges of the 21st century, for instance the fight against inequality, environmental protection and sustainable development."

To accompany this effort, a new permanent representative IOF office was officially inaugurated in Antananarivo



Madagascar President Hery Rajaonarimampianina (right) and Secretary-General of the International Organisation of La Francophonie Michaele Jean in Antananarivo in March EMBASSY OF MADAGASCAR

on March 23, attended by IOF Secretary-General H.E. Michaele Jean. This new regional office would seek further development of the potential of Francophonie culturally, politically and economically in the wider In-

dian Ocean rim.

In terms of our relationship with Japan, 2016 is a milestone year as Madagascar is fully participating in all the preparations for the success of the TICAD VI summit, which will be held for the first time in Af-



Former Minister of Agriculture and current Minister of Water Roland Ravatomanga (right) and Japanese Parliamentary Vice Minister of Agriculture Hidemichi Sato in Tokyo in March EMBASSY OF MADAGASCAR

rica, in Nairobi on Aug. 27 and 28. After missing the opportunity to participate in the TICAD V summit in 2013, Madagascar has keenly confirmed — during an official visit to Japan from March 8 to 12 of Roland Ravatomanga,

minister in charge of agriculture — that an important Malagasy delegation headed by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Madagascar Hery Rajaonarimampianina will participate in the TICAD VI summit.

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the Republic of Madagascar
on the 56th Anniversary
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