

Cameroon National Day

Government working to diversify economy

PIERRE NDZENGUE

AMBASSADOR OF CAMEROON



May 20 marks the 45th anniversary of the same date in 1972, Cameroonians — in what is dubbed in the nation's history as the peaceful revolution of 1972 — voted overwhelmingly in a

referendum to become a single and united country. On this momentous occasion, we come together as a nation to renew our commitment to live together as one people sharing a common destiny and goal.

On behalf of the people and government of Cameroon, Cameroonians living in Japan and the entire staff of the Cameroon embassy, I would like to convey my most sincere and respectful wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. In the same vein, let me also express my feelings of goodwill to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and friendly people of Japan.

We want to commemorate this day in Tokyo by highlighting a particular component of the bilateral relations that exist between our two countries — sports and education — especially in the runup to

the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. This is an opportunity to shine the spotlight on the young men and women from Cameroon who have benefitted from various study programs and offers in Japan.

In this regard, we particularly want to acknowledge the four young women who are studying at Tokyo International University. Prior to their admission, they had distinguished themselves as accomplished sportswomen on our national women's soccer team that took part in the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada and the 2016 Africa Women Cup of Nations in Cameroon, where they were runners-up.

In the same vein, we also want to celebrate the young men and women who are studying in Japan within the framework of the African Business Education Initiative for Youths. Qualified and well-trained manpower is one of the ingredients and catalysts for our drive to become an emergent economy. We are therefore hopeful that the training they will receive in Japan will enable them to participate in the development of the country.

We want both groups of young Cameroonians to know how proud we are to have them here and our hope is that they will be worthy ambassadors that foster the dynamic ties that exist between our two countries. They also represent a Cameroon that is sure and confident in its future.

Today not only affords us the opportunity

to look back at the progress we have made as a nation, but it is also a chance to chart the way forward. As a developing nation, the challenges are surely many, but so also are the opportunities to transform Cameroon into an emerging economy by 2035.

To this end, the government has relentlessly enacted policies to grow and diversify the economy and to render it more diversified, with emphasis on moving it from being an exporter of primary products to being a country based on local transformation and adding value for export. Despite the economic headwinds that have affected many economies on the continent, notwithstanding the security threat from Boko Haram, the Cameroonian economy has shown resilience to these external shocks and has performed well in registering 5 percent annual growth.

One sector receiving particular attention from the government is agriculture, which is trying to transform through mechanization to become a major growth area. There is also an added focus toward building more infrastructure and developing other sectors of the economy such as mining, energy and communication networks. These are all growth sectors and that is why Cameroon should be considered a haven for any potential investor both for the opportunities it offers and also its strategic location in West and Central Africa.