

Kenya National Day

Warm, cordial relations continue to grow

S.K. MAINA, MBS
AMBASSADOR OF KENYA



Dec. 12 marks the 54th Independence Anniversary of the Republic of Kenya. Accordingly, on this auspicious occasion, I wish to convey on behalf of the government and the people of Kenya

residing in Japan, warm greetings and best wishes to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and friendly people of Japan.

It is significant that I mention that in the last three months Kenya has affirmed her con-

stitutional democratic credentials. Kenyans went to the polls on Aug. 8. The declaration of President Uhuru Kenyatta as the winner was contested. The Supreme Court of Kenya, in exercising its institutional independence, annulled the results and declared fresh presidential elections to be held within 60 days. This was a historic judgment and a first on the African continent. On Oct. 26 fresh elections were held with Kenyatta once again being the victor. In keeping with the constitutional rights of Kenyans, the victory was once again contested. On Nov. 20, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the results and our president was sworn into office on Nov. 28.

As we celebrate this independence anniversary, I wish to reflect on the warm and cordial relationship that exists between our two friendly countries that has continued to grow from strength to strength over the last

54 years. Japan remains our valuable, reliable friend and development partner. I particularly recognize the fact that our relationship has grown beyond the confines of overseas development assistance programs to more of a cooperation and partnership based on respect, equity and understanding for our mutual benefits, mainly focusing on critical areas such as infrastructure development, agriculture, health, education, water and the environment, energy, information technology and human resource development.

Following the historic visit by the Japanese prime minister to Kenya from Sep. 26 to 29 in 2016 upon the invitation by our president, that also coincided with hosting of the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development Summit, our bilateral cooperation was elevated a notch higher. During the state visit, two crucial agreements and one memorandum of understanding (MOU) were signed. These included the Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, Grant Assistance for Economic and Social Development Programmes and the MOU on the Construction of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Dongo Kundu, Mombasa. Phase II of the infrastructural development and expansion of the port of Mombasa has commenced.

As our bilateral cooperation deepens, Japan is playing a key role toward realization of our long-term quest to economic

transformation under "Kenya Vision 2030," our economic blueprint that envisages transforming Kenya into a newly industrialized middle-income nation by the year 2030, where its citizens will enjoy the highest quality of life. In this regard, I wish to express my gratitude to Japanese public and private sector stakeholders for organizing a successful business mission on the Dongo Kundu SEZ development project from March 17 to 20. The business mission also involved French and Indian companies, courtesy of triangular trade arrangements. The facility is located next to the port of Mombasa and lies on a 1,326-hectare parcel of land. Once fully operational, it will host the first free-trade zone in the East and Central African region, where both domestic and foreign investors will be free to invest under very favorable terms, thus further reaffirming the Port of Mombasa as the largest in East Africa and the gateway that serves over a dozen neighboring countries.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the people and government of Japan for accepting to foster close cooperation with Kenya in culture and sports, especially as Japan prepares to host the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. In this regard, on Aug. 23, the Kenyan government signed a memorandum of understanding with the mayor of Kurume, Fukuoka Prefecture, and the governor of Fukuoka Prefecture to host "Team



There is ongoing infrastructure development to modernize and expand the Mombasa special economic zone.

EMBASSY OF KENYA

Kenya" during preparations to participate in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. Further, the Kenyan Embassy recently signed a memorandum of cooperation with Meguro Ward in Tokyo to cultivate closer cooperation on sports and culture for mutual understanding and benefit to our people.

At the multilateral level, our cooperation and common stand with Japan on critical international issues has been based on common history, shared values such as commitment to environmental protection and conservation, democracy, rule of law, free global trade (as per WTO principles) and desire for global peace and security for prosperity with the U.N. and its organs playing a pivotal role. In this regard, Kenya shares a common position on a reformed U.N. that conforms to prevailing global realities.

I also recognize the fact that both Kenya and Japan have been involved in several joint peacekeeping missions under U.N. auspices

in many parts of the world. It is significant to appreciate the commander of the training squadron of Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force and his officers for the role played in enhancing the capacity of the Port of Mombasa during their world training tour in October 2016. Kenya, as the host to two global agencies, the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) and U.N. Human Settlements Programme, appreciates Japan's role as one of the leading donor partners for global environmental protection and conservation through multilateral forums and for its continued unequivocal support to UNEP as a main agency for global environmental governance, with Nairobi as its headquarters. It is on the firm commitment to environmental conservation that in June the Kenyan government became the first country in the world to enact a strict law in banning the production and use of plastic bags to protect our environment for posterity.



The 140-MW Olkaria V Geothermal Power Plant in Naivasha is expected to be operational by 2019. EMBASSY OF KENYA

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

from the president and staff of
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