

Ghana Independence Day

Bilateral relationship continues to expand

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AMBASSADOR OF GHANA



It is my distinct pleasure to thank everyone in celebrating the 61st Independence Anniversary of Ghana. I convey the best wishes of H.E. President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-

Addo to all. Please allow me, on behalf of the government and people of Ghana, to express my deep appreciation, warmest wishes and gratitude to Their Imperial Majesties, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, as well as the government and people of Japan for the warm hospitality enjoyed by all Ghanaians either as visitors or residents of Japan.

On May 1, 2019, Crown Prince Naruhito will become the new emperor and a new era will be ushered in, replacing the Heisei Era. Ghana looks forward to a peaceful and orderly transition that will see Japan playing a greater and more active role in

international affairs in an unstable world. Therefore, let me extend warm felicitations and the best of luck to the Crown Prince. Quite significantly, the beginning of his reign will coincide with Japan's hosting of the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the G-20 summit and the 2020 Olympic Games.

Today, Ghana marks her 61st anniversary as an independent country, the first sub-Saharan African country to have gained freedom from colonialism, on March 6, 1957. It was a feat that brought Ghana to the forefront of continental and world affairs in the late '50s.

With every passing year, Ghana is challenged to grow its democracy and economy, while bettering the employment situation of the nation's young people desperately searching for work and prosperity. It is evident that at 61, the country has to take up more responsibility for leadership in sub-regional, continental and global affairs.

Coincidentally, our diplomatic relations with Japan also span 61 years, during which we have nurtured long-standing friendship. We have moved from being

tomodachi (friends) to become intimate *kokoronotomo* (soul mates). Thus, my mandate in Japan has been one of deepening and expanding Ghana-Japan relations to the level of strategic partnership based on sovereign equality and mutual respect. Our cooperative and productive relations cover all fields of endeavor, including the economic, political, agricultural, education, health and scientific fields. We also have shared values and a convergence of worldviews, which form the basis of our cooperation within the international organizations to which we belong.

Please let me share some of the positive developments within the past year that have taken place in Ghana under the leadership of our president, whose vision is to build a new Ghana.

Following general elections in December 2016, the government has been working hard to set out the modalities for achieving its vision of Ghana Beyond Aid by developing an optimistic, dynamic, resilient, self-confident and prosperous nation. Ghana aims to be a country that will creatively exploit its human and

natural resources, by adding value to our raw materials, deepening our democracy, building an open, multicultural and fair society, in which every individual will have opportunities to make fuller use of their God-given potential.

To achieve this vision, the government intends to use innovative approaches to remove the obstacles that prevent the growth of the private sector, mobilize more domestic revenue, protect the public purse and create the best and attractive business environment for private sector growth and development. The government also plans to safeguard the natural environment, by first repairing the damage and taking preventive and conservation measures that will ensure sustainable development. The government also plans to promote consensus-building that is essential to reduce the negative effect of partisanship on Ghana's development agenda.

Through the pursuit of pragmatic policies, Ghana's economic growth, which fell to 3.6 percent in 2016, grew significantly to 7.9 percent in 2017 and is forecast by various international financial institutions,

to rise above 8 percent this year. This will make Ghana one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

Regarding Ghana-Japan relations, our bilateral ties have remained excellent, solid and strong. During the past three years that I have been head of mission, Japan has funded and assisted in 15 projects through loans, grants or technical assistance. These include the new bridge over the Volta River, and access roads in the eastern corridor that will provide alternative routes to Togo and Burkina Faso and shorten the journey to the northern region of Ghana by over nine hours.

On behalf of the government and people of Ghana, I wish to thank the friendly and reliable people of Japan very sincerely, for these 15 critical projects that are saving and transforming lives in Ghana.

It is noteworthy that in 2016, Ghana and Japan added another plank to our bilateral diplomatic relations, when we organized and inaugurated parliamentary exchanges through the formation of parliamentary friendship leagues in our respective legislatures. In furtherance of this strengthening of ties, a four-member parliamentary delegation from Ghana is expected within a week from today as a sequel to the visit of our energy minister that ended two days ago. May I thank profusely, members of the

Japan-Ghana Parliamentary Friendship League and the AU-Japan Parliamentary League for reinforcing our bonds of friendship through the vital activities they have been organizing, involving our legislatures, for mutual benefit.

As I leave Japan, may I also extend gratitude to the able officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, as well as many other ministries and organizations that I have made my mission in Japan very worthwhile.

I also wish to thank Japanese companies, which have organized investment missions to Ghana on four occasions within the past three years, and have actually expanded the presence of Japanese companies operating in Ghana to over 26. Here I must give special mention to Lotte Co. for unflinching and exceptional support during my mission. Other companies and individuals have provided various forms of support and donations to charities in Ghana, and I thank them. I also thank those responsible for placement and scholarships for 53 Ghanaian students studying in Japanese universities, for their invaluable support.

Finally, I am grateful to several nonprofit organizations that have made generous donations to help orphanages, clinics and schools in Ghana during my tenure.



Statue of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, at his memorial park in Accra, Ghana. NKRUMAHINFOBANK.ORG



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