

# Benin National Day Special

## Reforms and investment plans fuel alliance

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AMBASSADOR OF BENIN



Today, I'm honored to commemorate the 59th Anniversary of Independence Day of Benin with the readers of The Japan Times, our partners and friends on this special occasion. On

behalf of President of the Republic of Benin Patrice Talon, his government and the Beninese people, I would like to present my warmest congratulations to my fellow citizens living in Japan and wish them happy celebrations.

Independence Day is not only a moment for celebration, but also an opportunity for reflection and to assess growth and progress. Fifty-nine years after independence, our dream of a progressive and prosperous Benin is manifesting brightly.

This commemorative day, in the new Reiwa Era, is the occasion to extend once again our sincere congratulations to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on his accession to the throne and our best wishes of happiness, health and prosperity to Their Majesties Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako. Our warmest greetings go also to the Emperor Emeritus Akihito and Empress Emerita Michiko and to the entire imperial family.

On this special day, I would like to renew our gratitude to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Cabinet ministers, Diet members, especially to the head of the Japan-Benin Parliamentary Friendship League, the governors and mayors of cities who cooperate with our country for their continued support.

Our president came into power in 2016 with an ambitious, forward-looking program of reforms and investment, "Revealing Benin," to transform Benin's economy and fight against poverty. His Governmental Action Plan (PAG) launched in December 2016, proposed key reforms in institutional, economic and social areas, in relation with the global goals known as the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims at creating an enabling business and investment climate and at transforming Benin's sluggish economy by 2021. Three years on, Revealing Benin is already delivering positive results.

Economically, Benin's real gross domestic product has grown by over 6 percent in 2018, up from 5.4 percent in 2017. In fact, the fast-acting impact of Revealing Benin is already clear in several areas. From energy to infrastructure to public spending, significant improvements have been noted, and it is just a start to the sustainable and enduring development. In the agriculture sector especially, the data points to a production increase in export of commodities such as cotton, cashew nuts and pineapples.

Since April 2016, major reforms are making Benin one of the most favorable environments for private investment. Under Revealing Benin, actions and reforms to improve the business climate have commenced. These include governance at the strategic level with the creation of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Investment Promotion, creation of the Agency for the Promotion of Investments and Exports and strengthening of legal and judicial framework to secure investments. Additional measures include offering specific conditions and facilities, considering Benin's advantageous and strategic position in the sub-region and offering international-standard work conditions and frameworks.

In pursuit of the bold vision of Revealing Benin, reforms have also focused on the governance of the country. In 2018, the political parties' charter was revised, and we adopted a new electoral law. The post-electoral political crisis faced after the parliamentary elections on April 28, is the outcome of these new rules. Several political parties, especially the oldest ones, could not adapt to these new reforms and weren't able to take part in these parliamentary elections. To ensure transparency and to make sure no one gets left behind, the president organized a dialogue with opposition parties on July 16. Benin remains a land of democracy and stability in Africa.

As the ambassador of Benin to Japan, I've had the privilege to meet with many Japa-

nese businesses in various sectors that are already trading with Benin or are considering operating in Benin. I am also pleased that Japanese consumers will soon come to discover our agricultural produce such as pineapples (among the sweetest in the world) and our world-class cashew nuts. It is promising that Japanese and Beninese businesses are realizing the opportunities within our countries. But we need to expand on this momentum. Businesses in our countries have to network, understand each other better and establish ways to overcome barriers that may arise. Essentially, this is one of our key objectives at the embassy.

The coming Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development to be held in Yokohama from Aug. 28 to 30 will be another concrete occasion to strengthen Benin relation with Japanese companies.



**Beninese Foreign Minister Aurelien Agbenonci and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono shake hands during a meeting in Tokyo in October.**

EMBASSY OF BENIN



**Japanese Ambassador to Benin Kiyofumi Konishi and President of Benin Patrice Talon shake hands in Cotonou, Benin's largest city and economic center, in November 2016.** PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFFICE, BENIN

The president has already confirmed his attendance and is looking forward to fruitful bilateral discussions with Abe and Japanese businesses and private bodies.

The alliance between Benin and Japan has grown stronger over the past few years and I believe that our partnership will only strengthen in the decades to come. So as we celebrate Benin's Independence Day, let's

also celebrate our vision for a more remarkable partnership with mutually beneficial economical, social and political exchanges between Japan and Benin.

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*

**Congratulations**  
to the People of the Republic of Benin  
on the Occasion of the 59th Anniversary of  
Their Independence



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