

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

On this momentous day when the Republic of Kenya celebrates and honours the heroes and heroines of our freedom struggle, I wish to salute their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, the government and the friendly people of Japan for standing shoulder to shoulder with their Kenyan brethren and, for the pivotal role they have played in Kenya's development efforts since independence. Japan is our leading Aid donor and considers Kenya as a model of its development cooperation with Africa in varied fields. We are proud of this unique honour and would like to see it even more enhanced in the years ahead, as *true partners in progress*.

As we commemorate this day, we also reflect on the sad and unprecedented triple tragedy that hit Japan in early March. We continue to stand in solidarity with you. We are fully confident that the speedy path to recovery which Japan has embarked on will see her emerge an even stronger and much more prosperous nation. The World Cup Victory by the Japanese women's soccer team, "Nadeshiko Japan" in July was a true display of the Japanese resilience. It also served to provide hope and vitality to the country as it faces the challenges associated with recovery and reconstruction.

As we commemorate our country's independence, we also reflect on the cordial and fraternal ties that characterize the relations between Kenya and Japan. We cherish the fact that since our independence in 1963, the government and people of Japan have always stood by Kenya. Not surprisingly therefore, Japan is our leading development partner. Indeed, our bilateral relations have continued to expand in the last few years.

This past year has witnessed heightened activities between our countries characterized by high level exchanges of visits. Notable to mention was the Public/Private Joint Mission in October 2011 led by the Senior Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. Earlier in March, the Association of Corporate Executives of Japan, Keizai Doyukai, had undertaken its very first mission to Africa which included Kenya. From the Kenyan side, we have had no fewer than four (4) Ministerial visits in the last quarter alone. Furthermore, it is remarkable that Nairobi has continued to host one of the largest Japanese communities in Africa including serving as the regional center for a number of them.

In the area of infrastructure development, Kenyans appreciate the fact that our partnership is focusing on areas that are critical to national development including key programmes under Vision 2030. Infrastructural development, including road networks construction and energy sector development, is emphasized under TICAD IV as being critical to the economic integration and support for the promotion of trade and investment in Africa.

Kenya is currently undertaking the most ambitious infrastructure investment programs in our nation's history aimed at enhancing our regional integration process. We have begun the development of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor Project. This new transport corridor will open up vast parts of Kenya and stimulate economic and social development. Most importantly, the project will link Kenya to Ethiopia and South Sudan through the pipeline, railway line and highway thereby enhancing trade and investment in our region. In the long term, this project will contribute to the developments of the Trans-Africa highway which is a key project under the African Union.

Other interventions that we are undertaking include the expansion as well as modernization of our airports, pipeline, roads and telecommunications in order to meet the regional demand for efficient transport services. We have also continued to modernize the port of Mombasa. This is in recognition of the importance of the port of Mombasa in facilitating regional trade and investments.

We wish to assure our partners and business fraternity of Kenya's commitment to ensuring efficient and timely port services. In similar vein, the government is undertaking measures whose objective is to facilitate private sector investment in infrastructure development and management. We are confident that with the participation of the private sector we can mobilize our own resources to finance infrastructure development. We hope to see more involvement of Japan in these processes.

Due to the importance of energy in the economy, the Government has placed high priority to increasing power generation capacity in order to meet the existing demand. In spite of progress we have made in this direction, we are still experiencing a deficit in power generation. Kenya is now reviewing its

power development strategy in order to minimize dependence on hydro power generation. In this regard, the Government is putting more emphasis on green energy development with a special focus on geothermal resources as well as coal, oil and wind powered plants. In this regard therefore we welcome the Japanese private sector to exploit this massive potential by investing in geothermal power generation either independently or in partnership with the public sector. Additional support from our development partners is also sought in exploiting this geothermal potential as part of the global strategy for mitigating climate change.

In the field of agriculture, Japan has been a reliable partner in efforts towards improved agricultural productivity and food security which is key to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We particularly appreciate the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), an initiative with the aim of doubling rice production in Africa within 10 years. Under this initiative, one of the major irrigation schemes in Kenya-the Mwea- has greatly expanded.

In the area of Capacity Building, it is notable that over 6,000 Kenyans have thus far been trained in Japan. In addition, Japan is funding educational programmes in Kenya including the Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education (SMASSE).

In environmental conservation, Japan and Kenya share a unique responsibility and a common vision for global sustainability. Kenyans appreciate Japan's support for ongoing efforts to strengthen the UN Office in Nairobi as well as ongoing discussions on Climate Change and the transformation of International Environmental Governance (IEG).

Commercial interactions between our two countries are witnessing an upward trend with the trade volume now in excess of Yen 50 billion. Although the balance of trade is still heavily tilted in favour of Japan, we are hoping that this gap can be bridged through increased exports to Japan as a result of trade diversification, joint ventures and direct investments. I therefore take this opportunity to invite prospective Japanese entrepreneurs to explore the wide ranging opportunities available in the expanded East African Community with a population of almost 130 Million. Areas that are

ready for foreign direct investments include Agriculture, Mining, Tourism, Real Estate Development and trade.

East Africa boasts one of the largest single-bloc regional markets in Africa. This market is made even bigger by a series of mutually beneficial partnerships with regional blocs such as COMESA and SADC, boasting a combined population well over 600 million. It is noted that negotiations in deepening integration amongst the three (3) regional economic communities is ongoing. The aim is the eventual establishment of a Tripartite Free Trade Area which will bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market, increase investment flows, enhance competitiveness and develop cross-regional infrastructure.

In tourism, “Kenya” is synonymous with the African “Safari”. As the home of the “Big Five” (Lion, Leopard Elephant, Rhino, and Buffalo) the people of Japan are invited to visit Kenya and savour the unmatched and truly incredible range of fascinating natural beauty including the Open savannah, the deep tropical rain forest, soda and freshwater lakes, alpine meadows, spectacular coral reefs, caves and beaches. Your visit will also afford you better appreciation and understanding of Kenya, her people and rich heritage. Indeed this is the depiction that we are witnessing here on stage through our talented and world famous Japanese-turned Kenyan, Ms. Eriko Mukoyama, popularly known by her Kenyan name, “Anyango”.

Many of you are close watchers of the momentous developments that are taking place in Kenya’s landscape especially with the new Constitutional dispensation. The constitution is of paramount importance to the socio-economic and political development of Kenya. We are committed to its full and proper implementation which will see Kenya scale even greater heights of prosperity.

I wish to thank the Government and people of Japan for their love and generosity to the people of the Horn of Africa including Kenya when we recently faced the worst drought and famine in the last six (6) decades. We appreciate your generous donations which went a long way to avert a catastrophic food crisis in Kenya and the region at the time. More importantly however we have the burden to eradicate the perennial drought and famine situations in the medium and long-term as contained in the

Nairobi Strategy adopted at the Summit on the Horn of Africa Crisis on September 9, 2011. The strategy focuses on preventive rather than reactive measures, and should be holistic rather than emergency oriented. This is an area that needs enhanced partnership within the region and beyond.

Let me congratulate all Kenyan citizens resident in Japan on this auspicious occasion. We wish to commend you all your patriotism and positive contribution towards the strengthening of the Kenya- Japan relations. I particularly salute our athletes for flying our flag high and other professionals who have always displayed exemplary hard work and dedication.

Finally, I wish to record our appreciation to all those who have sent us messages of goodwill. We wish you all a happy and enjoyable festive season and best wishes for the New Year.

BENSON H. O. OGUTU
AMBASSADOR

December 12, 2011