

**MESSAGE FROM H.E BENSON H.O. OGUTU THE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND  
PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA ON KENYA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE:**

Today marks Kenya's Golden Jubilee and 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary of Japan-Kenya diplomatic relations. On this auspicious and historic occasion, I wish at the outset to convey warm greetings and best wishes to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko as well as the Government and the people of this great and friendly Nation. Our special gratitude goes to the Japan Post Corporation for launching a commemorative stamp in celebration of the half-century long journey that we have travelled together with Japan as, **Partners in Progress**.

Indeed, since 1963, Kenya as the gateway and hub for East and Central Africa, has occupied a very special position in Japan's diplomatic relations within the region. Today, Nairobi hosts one of the largest Japanese communities in Africa and is the regional headquarters for all of Japan's major agencies such as JICA, JETRO and others. Japan's invaluable contribution to our development process is evident in such critical areas as: economic infrastructure, agriculture, health, environment and human resource development.

As we celebrate this year's Golden Jubilee, under the theme **"Unity, Prosperity and Kenya as a home of the Greats"**, we reflect on the progress we have made in the last five decades. Kenyans now have better access to basic necessities like food, shelter, education, health and security services and, indeed, enjoy a better standard of living than was the case 50 years ago. We have a strong and growing middle-class and a well-educated workforce. In addition, our financial and ICT sectors are thriving. However, as a nation, we still face various challenges. These include; a slow growth and underperforming manufacturing, agriculture and transport sectors – key drivers to the much needed export-led growth. Power supply also falls below demand. The levels of unemployment and poverty are still unacceptably high.

Pursuant to addressing the above challenges, the Government has been implementing various development strategies, the latest being the Vision 2030 which aims at transforming Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country, providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by the year 2030. Its first Medium Term Plan was implemented between 2008 and 2012. The second Medium Term Plan outlines the policies, programmes and projects which are to be carried out during the five year period starting 2013 to 2017. They entail the delivery of accelerated and inclusive economic growth, higher living

standard, better education and health care, increased job creation especially for youth, commercialized agriculture providing higher rural incomes and affordable food, improved manufacturing sector and more diversified exports. The development of oil and other mineral resources is now included among the priority sectors. This follows the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Kenya, in addition to substantial deposits of coal, iron ore, rare earth minerals and other minerals. Mineral exports are also expected to help close the balance of trade and to raise government revenue.

In order to meet the goals of job creation, value-addition in agriculture, fisheries and livestock, and export diversification, the government is in the process of establishing special economic zones in partnership with private investors to support increased manufacturing and export with high value added. Priority will also be accorded to programmes targeting training and apprenticeships to meet the demand for human resource skills required by the transformation of the Kenya economy which is central to this medium-term plan. In addition, more investments will be directed towards infrastructure and to the key sectors of the economy that will drive growth particularly through public private partnerships arrangements.

We, therefore, encourage potential Japanese investors to take advantage of the conducive environment created by the government. Abundant opportunities exist in sectors such as energy, infrastructure development, oil and mineral resources exploration, environmental protection, agricultural industrialization, as well as human resource development. Other attractive opportunities are also available in the ICT sector, particularly in construction of Konza technology city – a sustainable, world-class technology hub and a major economic driver for the nation with a vibrant mix of businesses, workers, residents, and urban amenities. Needless to mention, impressive progress has already been recorded evidenced by Kenya's global recognition as a leading ICT hub. Indeed, Kenya has received three global awards for facilitating the development of ICT infrastructure, use of e-applications in public services, and the famous mobile money transaction technology, M-pesa.

In August 2010, Kenya promulgated a new constitution, giving us renewed optimism about our country and its future. It provided us with an avenue to renew our fight against unemployment and poverty; an opportunity to work and become a developed people and nation. Amongst the key transformations of the new Constitution is the devolved system of Government, which established forty-seven (47) county governments. Devolution will not only facilitate the delivery of services and ensure equity but will also lead

to the emergence of new centers of economic development with the priorities determined at the local level, hence inculcating more ownership and sustainability.

In May, 2013 the Government appointed Mr. Jun Karube (President of Toyota Tsusho Corporation) the very first Honorary Consul of the Republic of Kenya in Japan. The Consulate is based in Nagoya city with jurisdiction over the Chubu region. This appointment takes due cognizance of the growing and mutually beneficial relations between Kenya and Toyota Tsusho Corporation – a reflection of the company's joint strategy for Africa under its Global 2020 Vision. Consequently, the company has greatly expanded its operations in Kenya, making Nairobi the regional headquarters of Toyota in Eastern Africa. More importantly, Toyota Tsusho was the first private entity to sign an MOU with the Secretariat implementing Kenya's development Blue Print – Vision 2030. Thus the appointment is of great significance as it reflects our desire to enhance our bilateral relations particularly in the economic and commercial spheres.

We are also encouraged by the fact that other major Japanese trading houses and corporations have followed this positive trend by scaling up their economic activities in the country. In addition, the trade volume between the two countries has steadily been growing, though still very heavily lopsided in favour of Japan in the ratio of 1:14. There is definitely need to bridge this gap. Accordingly, we are urging Japan to buy more of our top quality products ranging from tea, coffee, fruits and nuts amongst others. It is notable that in recent past the Kenyan flowers are gaining popularity in Japanese market due to its long shelf-life. Investment in value addition would also go a long way in redressing the imbalance.

During the course of this year, the two countries witnessed heightened activities characterized by high level exchanges of visits. In June 2013, H.E. Hon. William S. Ruto, Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya led a high powered Kenya delegation comprising several Cabinet Secretaries to TICAD V. Other key visits from Kenya included that of the Cabinet Secretary for Education to Science and Technology in Society (STS) Forum in Kyoto; Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources to Conference of the Plenipotentiaries on the Minamata Convention on Mercury at Kumamoto city; Governor of Kisumu County; Kenya National Defence College study tour; Kenya National Rugby Sevens Team; among others. From Japan side, a large investment and trade delegation of senior government officials and top business executives, led by Hon. Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, visited selected

countries in Africa, including Kenya in August 2013. The Leadership of various agencies and private sector executives have also undertaken exchange visits.

Turning to tourism, we pride ourselves at the unparalleled range of options on offer. The diversity of landscapes, cultures, wildlife and activities provide endless opportunities. As a country, tourism is a major contributor to our economy. Under Vision 2030, several projects are lined up such as development of resort cities in Diani, Kilifi and Isiolo. Hotels, housing facilities, state of the art sporting facilities, airstrips and good road networks are just part of the infrastructure that the resort cities will enjoy. The government has also put in place mechanisms to address any cases of insecurity in its tourist circuits across the country. Kenya being the home of the “big five” also has the highest concentration of different species of wildlife in a given square unit of land. We say “seeing is believing,” we therefore extend a warm welcome to more Japanese tourists to visit Kenya and enjoy the magnificent and splendor of its wilderness.

We are happy to note that the number of the Japanese visitors to Kenya has been increasing commendably over the years registering almost 50 % of arrivals from 10, 866 in 2010 to 17,000 in 2012. The number is expected to go even higher this year. This increase notwithstanding, the Japanese market is still relatively small compared to other Asian markets. The major airlines such Emirates, Etihad, Qatar, and Turkish now ply the routes between Nairobi and Narita/Haneda/Osaka via their respective capitals. Kenya Airways has also concluded a code-share arrangement with Korean Air to facilitate travel to Kenya. This is an encouraging development that we impress upon tourism stakeholders to capitalize on.

At a regional level, the Government of Kenya is committed to work closely with member states to hasten regional integration. During the last few months the EAC region has held three successful regional infrastructures Summit, deliberating on various issues pertaining regional infrastructure, energy, trade facilitation and other areas aimed at strengthening cooperation and speed up socio-economic development in the region. Member countries have also come together and formed a united platform to marketing East Africa as a single tourist destination with a single tourist visa.

Regional integration will, in no doubt, expand the market for investors, enhance intra-regional trade and facilitate the growth of the East African economies for the benefit of the people and its partners. With a population of about 136 million people and a combined GDP of 84.7 billion dollars, EAC also boasts of an

average 732 dollars per capita and the respective governments have moved to engage the private sectors in the member countries to help drive further the economic growth. At the end of last month, the Heads of State of the EAC signed a protocol laying the groundwork for a monetary union within ten (10) years. This will put the region into an irreversible journey towards a single currency, thus ushering an era of full financial integration and expanded regional trade. We count on Japan's support towards deepening the EAC integration process by way of exploiting the numerous investments opportunities available in the region.

The recent Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) held at Yokohama in June 2013 was a major milestone event, marking the 20th anniversary of the TICAD process as well as African Union's golden jubilee. Through TICAD, Japan has continued to encourage growth in Africa by promoting the importance of self-help and self-reliance. During the Conference, Japan announced its contribution of US\$ 32 billion in support of the African development agenda over the coming 5 years. Kenya and other African countries have identified priority areas for the implementation of the Yokohama Action Plan and utilization of the financial package offered. These focus on: promotion of private-sector led growth; acceleration of infrastructure development; empowering farmers as mainstream economic actors; promoting sustainable and resilient growth; creating an inclusive society for growth; consolidation of peace, stability and good governance; making Africa's voice heard in the post-2015 development agenda. We hope to build on those noble endeavours in the years to come.

Finally, I wish to congratulate all Kenyan residents in Japan on this auspicious occasion and applaud them for their continuous positive contributions in advancement of the interests of beloved country, through investments, knowledge transfers, remittances and of course, sporting excellence. Kenyans in Japan have truly demonstrated their desire for a better Kenya. We have a couple of investors already in the country courtesy of your deep act of patriotism. Kenya now has many investment opportunities available in all sectors of the economy, among them the Vision 2030 flagship projects. We urge Kenyans in the Diaspora to take advantage of these opportunities and help in building our country. You are the most critical component of team Kenya and I urge you to keep flying high the flag of our motherland.

I once again thank the Government and people of Japan for their vital support and cooperation in our development endeavours. I also would like to thank all those who have sent us messages of goodwill. I wish

you all a happy and enjoyable festive season. For more information about Kenya, kindly visit our Mission's website at <http://www.kenyarep-jp.com>.