

## National Day of Kenya

Publicity

## Kenya-Japan relations continue to thrive

By S. K. Maina, MBS  
Ambassador of Kenya

Today, Dec. 12, marks the 52nd independence anniversary of the Republic of Kenya. Accordingly, on this auspicious occasion, I wish at the outset to convey warm greetings and best wishes to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress as well as the government and the friendly people of Japan. I also take this opportunity to pay special tribute to all Kenyan nationals resident in Japan for their relentless commitment to Kenya's cause, and indeed all distinguished readers of The Japan News.



Amb. S. K. Maina

As we celebrate this event here in Japan, I wish to reflect on our cordial relationship with Japan that dates back to immediately after the attainment of our independence. Indeed our collaboration has continued on an increasingly upward trend beyond the confines of official development assistance programs to more strategic partnerships based on mutual respect, common trust and shared values. This is clearly manifested through enhanced engagements between the business communities in both countries and the exchange of high-level visits by high ranking state and government officials as well as by top business executives in the recent past.

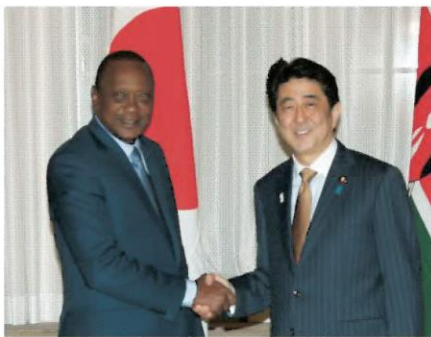
Notable examples of successful exchange visits and engagements in the last one year alone include an official visit to Japan

by His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta in March to attend the Disaster Risk Reduction Conference in Sendai; an official visit by Her Excellency the First Lady in August for the World Assembly for Women conference in Tokyo; an inaugural visit to Kenya by the new JICA President, Dr. Shinichi Kitaoka; various ministerial official visits; Kenyan seminars in Japan on energy, Kenya Ports Authority, Special Economic Zone; the Kenya-Japan Business Forum held in Nairobi, and roundtable discussions between top Japanese business executives and His Excellency President Kenyatta in Nairobi.

Our two countries' commitment to strengthen strategic partnerships is also evidenced by heightened bilateral engagements in support of Kenya's development blueprint Vision 2030 in key areas such as hydro and geothermal energy development; an oil pipeline project, the expansion and modernization of Mombasa port and its surrounding areas; agricultural development; human resource development and health-sector reforms.

As the gateway to Eastern and Central Africa, Kenya occupies a special position in Japan's diplomatic relations with Africa. Today, Kenya hosts one of the largest Japanese communities in Africa (about 700 Japanese nationals) and is the regional headquarters for all of Japan's major agencies

— JICA, JETRO and JBIC — as well as its largest trading houses. Currently there are approximately 50 Japanese companies operating in Kenya, the second-largest number in Sub-Saharan Africa. Japan is now Kenya's leading develop-



Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta meets Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during an official visit to Tokyo in March.

ment partner in Sub-Saharan Africa particularly in five priority areas, namely: economic infrastructure, agriculture, health, education and environment.

**Host of TICAD VI Summit**

This strong momentum is a clear demonstration of our two countries' earnest efforts in deepening further mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields of development. Kenya, on its part, has prioritized its engagements along the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) framework upon which it is furthering its cooperation with Japan. It is on the premise of Kenya's commitment to TICAD

that indeed informed our decision to offer Nairobi as host city for the TICAD VI Summit next year. The honor to host this very important forum is a clear recognition that Kenya and Africa in general are ripe for mutually profitable partnerships with Japan.

As you are probably aware, this will be the first time that the TICAD conference is held outside Japan, and most importantly in Africa, since its inception in 1993. The event comes at an opportune moment when Japan's engagement with Africa is witnessing an upward trend following the successful conclusion of the TICAD V Summit that was held in June 2013 in Yokohama under the theme "Hand in

Hand with a More Dynamic Africa."

Holding the TICAD VI Summit in Africa therefore serves to reaffirm TICAD's principle of African-owned development initiatives and genuine global partnership upon which the TICAD process was founded. Like all African countries, Kenya believes that the initiative will give the continent's ordinary citizens the opportunity to get a sense of ownership of the TICAD process and appreciate its significance in contributing to Africa's growth.

**Preferred FDI destination**

On its part, Kenya has positioned itself as a preferred foreign direct investment destination in the Eastern Africa region. This is well demonstrated through economic reforms that promote foreign investments, development of functional institutions, human resource development, and enhanced regional integrations. Most importantly, Kenya is committed to lowering the cost of doing business through extensive business regulatory reforms.

Milestone steps evidenced in modernizing railways, seaports, airports and development of geothermal power stations all put Kenya on an accelerated developmental pedestal. This is further complemented by Kenya being a member of both the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) economic regional blocs, which both have a combined market population of over 400 million.

Indeed, Kenya's position as the economic, commercial and logistical hub in eastern Central Africa places the country as one of the

best investment destinations globally. Foreign direct investment has been on the rise and its growth is the strongest in the East Africa region. Additionally, the rebased gross domestic product figure of \$58.1 billion in 2014 elevated Kenya to a lower middle-income country, one of the largest economies in Sub-Saharan Africa and among the fastest growing in the world. In the region, Kenya is the dominant economy in the East Africa Community, contributing to more than 40 percent of the region's GDP.

On the tourism front, I am pleased to reiterate that Japanese tourists are a very special niche of the market for Kenya as a tourism destination by virtue of their value-oriented consumption and eagerness to learn from their travel experiences. It is in this regard, that the Japanese market has been earmarked as one of the potential sources to contribute to Kenya's goal of becoming one of the top long haul tourist destinations in the world offering a high-end, diverse and distinctive visitor experience. In pursuing this goal, the Embassy of Kenya is closely working together with the Kenya Tourism Board on measures to increase Kenya's visibility within the Japanese market and indeed address other pertinent issues that are of particular concern to Japanese travelers. We therefore encourage continued collaboration with the tourism stakeholders on promoting Kenya's many distinctive products and increasing Japanese travel to Kenya.

For more information about Kenya, kindly visit our website at <http://www.kenyarep-jp.com>

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to the People of  
the Republic of Kenya  
on the 52nd Anniversary of  
Their Independence



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