

A Message from H.E. Mr. Maruyama Norio, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of South Africa, for the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japan Self Defense Forces

The threat of the COVID-19 pandemic still continues. I would like to express my deepest sympathy to those who have suffered from the epidemic and condolences to those who have died.

Many healthcare professionals around the world are working hard every day to prevent the spread of infections. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and great respect to all the frontline workers who are fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the unforeseen circumstances which we face today, we humbly celebrate the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japan Self Defense Forces (JSDF).

Looking back, when the Korean War broke out in 1950 there was a need for organizations to strengthen national safety and security, this led to the formation of the National Police Reserve. On the 1st of July 1954, this became the core of the establishment of the new JSDF.

Over the years, through the Japan-USA alliance, the JSDF has contributed to regional and domestic peace, stability and disaster relief. Through the implementation of the Japanese fundamental foreign policy of contributing to world peace and stability, the role of JSDF and the expectation of JSDF have been expanding.

Japan is also striving to achieve a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” from the perspective of promoting the stability and prosperity of the region stretching from the Asia-Pacific, passing through the Indian Ocean, to the Middle East and Africa, by treating this region as an integrated whole and securing the free and open order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces are also making various efforts to promote FOIP.

The peace and stability of the African continent is of crucial importance to Japan. The JSDF continues with its commitment to international peace-keeping operations through its ongoing personnel presence in South Sudan and its support of anti-piracy operations in the seas around Djibouti.

In South Africa, the JSDF has cooperated and has made various contributions to the South

African National Defence Force (SANDF), through the Peace Mission Training Center (PMTTC) at SANDF Training Command. Furthermore, we will continue to promote cooperation for international peace between Japan and South Africa.

In Japan, the JSDF continues to promote efforts to actively prevent the spread of infection. Recently, the JSDF has started to set up and operate large vaccination sites, namely; Tokyo and Osaka.

The setting up and operation of large vaccination sites are new attempts for the JSDF, but the mission is carried out perfectly by their high command and control capabilities and operational capabilities. 80 JSDF medical officers, 200 nurses, and 200 private nurses are mobilized at two large vaccination sites, and 15,000 people can be vaccinated daily in total.

The JSDF has inoculated about 400,000 people in just one month from the beginning of the operation of the sites at the end of May. Through the operation of the sites, the JSDF is promoting vaccination for COVID-19 infections and contributing to the prevention of the spread of infection.

I hope that the day will come as soon as possible when we overcome this pandemic. Please accept my best wishes for your good health and infinite success.

MARUYAMA Norio  
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of South Africa