

**Message from H. E. Mr. MARUYAMA Norio, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of South Africa, on the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday**

23 February 2022  
Fourth year of Reiwa

Today I would like to celebrate the 62nd birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. Due to difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is highly unfortunate that I am unable to host the reception to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's birthday this year, as we were also unable to celebrate last year.

On this auspicious day, I would like to share with you my thoughts on relations between Japan and South Africa, especially in light of the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8), which will be held this year in August.

**Commitment by TICAD7 and Benefit to South Africa**

TICAD has been developing into a pioneering forum on development in Africa, led by the Government of Japan in collaboration with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the African Union Commission (AUC).

At TICAD7 in 2019 held in Yokohama, Japan made commitments to develop industrial human resources, promote innovation and investment, expand UHC and strengthen the Africa Health Initiative, institutional building and governance, and has implemented these commitments sincerely and concretely.

These commitments have tangible benefits throughout the entire African continent, including South Africa.

In terms of investment, at TICAD7, Japan committed to a total of \$20 billion on the African continent in the next three years, as it did in the three years since TICAD6. These investments are part of that commitment.

Among the investments done in South Africa, the most recent example is that Toyota began production of its first hybrid vehicle on the African continent just before the 2021 United Nations climate change conference (COP26), after overcoming COVID-19 and the unrest in July 2021. Nissan and Isuzu also made capital investment for local production of new models in South Africa.

In accordance with its commitment to TICAD7, Japan also provided support in collaboration with international organizations. Toyota, with the support of the Japanese government and the UNDP, a co-sponsor of TICAD, opened a "Toyota Manufacturing School" in KwaZulu-Natal and is fully committed to the education of and employment creation for South African youth, including job placement for those who complete the program. This support is a tripartite partnership between the public and private sectors and international organizations. In addition, the Government of Japan, through the UNDP, has been working on measures to combat COVID-19 infection and to provide employment support to workers affected by COVID-19, support for vulnerable women against COVID-19 and GBV through UN Women, and measures against marine plastic litter through UNIDO. These are also the outcomes of discussions at TICAD. In particular, the Toyota Manufacturing School is one of the major achievements of TICAD, which was achieved through the cooperation of the Japanese government, international organizations and private companies.

In addition, based on its commitment to TICAD7, Japan has been providing a variety of support to meet the needs of local communities and civil society. One example is the various projects that Japan has been implementing in South Africa since the 1990s in the framework of Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects. Since TICAD7, 19 cooperation projects have been implemented in various parts of South Africa, including Gauteng, Limpopo, Western Cape and Eastern Cape, in the areas of health, education, women's health and empowerment, disability support, and skills development, over the three-year period 2019-2021. I recently had the opportunity to visit the Tharollo Drop-In-Centre in Tshamahansi, Limpopo Province. The renovation of this center was one of the projects done in 2016 as a part of support to the local community, when a Japanese company decided to participate in the mining operation going on in this area. During my visit, I realized how well it has taken root in and contributed to the local community during the past six years. This is one of the examples of cooperation between Japanese companies and the Government of Japan to address the issues facing South African local communities.

Human resource development is essential to South Africa's economic growth and was one of the central themes at TICAD7. One example is the African Business Education Initiative, known as ABE Initiative, which is in line with South Africa's policy of emphasizing the promotion of business relations with Japan. Under the ABE Initiative, 123 South Africans have studied at Japanese universities and are now contributing to the business and economic development of South Africa by utilizing their experiences, including employment at Japanese companies in South Africa.

## Business Environment

I have a strong desire to see Japanese companies continue to expand their operations in South Africa and create jobs, but to do that I would like to emphasize once again that the protection and safety of all lives, property of the investors and property of employees is of primary importance in the activities of Japanese companies. From this point of view, the unrest that occurred in KZN and Gauteng in July 2021 was regrettable.

I strongly hope that such incidents will never occur again in the future, and I welcome any kind of concrete measures the South African government will take to prevent its recurrence.

Also related to this, there are urgent needs to launch the Japan-South Africa Business Forum, which both countries committed to in the presence of President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Investment Conference in 2019. Japan is ready for that.

## Carbon Neutral Society

In order for the further strengthening of the relationship between Japan and South Africa in the future, discussions toward a decarbonized society have become particularly important in recent years, especially cooperation in the field of hydrogen. South Africa not only has an abundance of renewable energy sources for solar and wind power, but also has crucial minerals necessary for fuel cell and the capacity to produce hydrogen on its own land. In this respect, South Africa is such a blessed country in the world and attracting worldwide attention. Japanese companies are also paying close attention to South Africa's potential, and I would like to further promote the cooperation between Japan and South Africa toward a Carbon Neutral Society. In this connection, I highly appreciate that the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr. Blade Nzimande, has participated twice in the annual Hydrogen Energy Ministerial Meeting held by Japan, where he delivered very meaningful speeches.

Science and technology are the keys to advancing a hydrogen society. Scientists in Japan and South Africa have been conducting joint research in various fields, including decarbonization, under several cooperative frameworks such as Agreement on Co-operation in Science and Technology in 2003, SATREPS, and AJ-CORE. The Government of Japan will continue to support these trends.

## Culture

Culture brings people of South Africa and Japan closer together even though they are geographically distant, and reminds us of the importance of interest in and understanding of each other's cultures to the advancement of the relationship between our two nations.

For the first time since 2019, I have the pleasure to announce that we will hold the 27th Japanese Film Festival in Pretoria and Johannesburg in March. I hope that you will enjoy the latest trend in Japanese films.

Japan is promoting Japanese food around the world; Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador is one of the programmes that serves this purpose. In January this year, Mr Peter Tempelhoff at FYN Restaurant in Cape Town was appointed as the first Goodwill Ambassador to promote Japanese Cuisine in South Africa. FYN has been promoting the appeal of the taste of Japan through its fine cuisine and I am grateful that Mr Tempelhoff will take on the role as a Goodwill Ambassador in South Africa.

We will keep up our strive towards making South Africa feel closer to Japan.

I will continue to maintain and accelerate close relations between our two countries at all levels.

In this regard, I strongly hope that the Japan-South Africa Partnership Forum, which has not been held since 2013, will be held in Japan as soon as the COVID-19 situation permits, to further promote cooperation between Japan and South Africa.

I would like to close my message by offering my heartfelt prayers and wishes for His Majesty's continued good health, and the prosperity of the Imperial Court, as well as the good health of everyone else reading this message.

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