

THE CELEBRATION OF THE 54th ANNIVERSARY OF
THE INDEPENDENCE OF BENIN

THE SPEECH OF THE AMBASSADOR

Tokyo, August 1st, 2014

- Mr. ISHIHARA Hirotaka, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Representing the Japan Government ;
- Mr. YAMANAKA Shinnichi, Administrative Vice-Minister for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan;
- Honorable HIRASAWA Katsuei, Chairman of the Parliamentary League of Friendship Japan-Benin;
- Excellency Mr. Ambassador MARUYAMA Norio, Director-General for African Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Personal Representative of the Prime Minister of Japan;
- Excellency Mr. ESTIFANOS AFEWORKI HAILE, Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps;
- Excellencies Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Distinguished Representatives of Japan Cooperation Agencies and other countries of our jurisdiction (Asia, Pacific Ocean) ;
- Distinguished Guests in your ranks, titles and respective qualities;
- Dear Compatriots;
- Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to speak today, the 1st August 2014, on the occasion of the celebration of the 54th anniversary of the accession of my country, Republic of Benin, to the international sovereignty.

On this happy occasion, I wish you all the warm and cordial welcome to have accepted, despite your rather busy schedule throughout the week ends, to honor of your presence at this ceremony.

Benin that I have the great honor to represent, is a country of the area of 114.763km²

and the population about ten million (10,000,000) people, posing as an access key to the West Africa, with his head in the Sahel and his foot bathing in the Atlantic Ocean.

Since the advent of the Conference of the Forces of the Nation, in February 1990, Benin Republic has become a country where peace and political stability reign, supported by a multi-party democracy that consolidates, day by day, in the fundamental human rights.

The principle of the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers guaranteed by the Constitution is respected, and the alternation in power is carried out through the organization of elections at regular intervals. The institutions of the opposition ensure the monitoring and play independently the role assigned to each. The Fourth power that I want to name “the Press” enjoys full freedom to give information, training and education of citizens.

Democratic renewal and economic renewal being interconnected, the Government of Benin, led by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Dr. YAYI Boni Thomas, is making unremitting efforts to undertake profound economic reforms aimed to creating conditions conducive to the achievement of sustainable economic growth, pledge of wealth creation and the reduction of poverty.

The vision of the Government of Benin is to build a new dynamic, directed to a competitive economy, at the crossroads of West Africa and Central Africa.

Several challenges remain as follows:

- Improving the quality of the governance in all sectors of the public activity,
- Strengthening and development of the human capital,
- The achievement of the basic infrastructure in the sectors of water, energy and transport,
- Environmental governance in order to strengthen the capacity to adapt to the climate change,
- Promoting public / private partnerships.

Allow me here to remind to the international opinion that the government of His Excellency Dr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin continues to take actions which will especially remain forever engraved in the memory of the Beninese people. These include the free primary education since the 2006-2007 school year, the free Caesarean section, the supply of clear water in rural Benin.

The purpose of these challenges is to ensure a real human security and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in my country, especially in target on:

- The elimination of poverty,
- The reduction of hunger and malnutrition,
- Access to primary education for all children,
- Gender equality and women empowerment,
- The reduction of maternal and infant mortality,
- Access to clean water, electricity and basic sanitation.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The implementation of these initiatives has led Benin to organize an Economic Round Table, from 17 to 19 June 2014 in Paris, at the end of which bilateral and multilateral public and private partners, have committed to support Benin with 12 billion U.S. dollars to finance the various programs and projects. The goal is to accelerate economic growth to reach during the next five (05) years, a rate of at least 8 percent increase, and to bring the current investment rate of 19 percent to 28 percent.

Among these partners called upon to support the various programs and projects, my country, Benin, knows it can count on Japan and obviously on all the country of the jurisdiction (Asia and Pacific Ocean).

Indeed, the excellent relationship that happily exists between Japan and Benin Republic, since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1961, is the result of constructive political dialogue established between the Highest Authorities of our two countries, namely the President of the Republic of Benin, His Excellency Dr. YAYI Boni Thomas and the Japan Prime Minister, ABE Shinzo.

I would like to appreciate the very significant contribution of the Japanese Cooperation to the Development of Benin, in the fields of education, health, agriculture, aquaculture and inland fisheries, rural water supply, which has achieved many social and community infrastructure including among others, the construction of modules of classes in primary schools, health centers, water supply, enhancement of the facilities and equipment of the "Mother and Child Hospital" in Cotonou, strengthening the Normal School of Teachers at Djougou.

I also would like to emphasize KR1 and KR2 annual food aid, and the support to increase agricultural production through the provision of agricultural fertilizer, which contribute to the fight against hunger and malnutrition programs.

I feel a lot of hope for the realization of new development projects currently under study whose benefits will positively impact the lives of the people of Benin.

I cannot ignore the tremendous works that have been achieved by the various Japanese Development Agencies in my country: the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Japan International Cooperation System (JICS), the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV).

Sending Japanese volunteers in Benin, welcoming students and young Beninese students in Japan have undoubtedly contributed to link the Japanese and Benin people.

The Government of Benin is firmly committed to work to ensure that this cooperation will develop further in all areas with an increased involvement of the private sector and the non-governmental organizations.

It is on these words of hope that I would invite all the business community to redouble their efforts and commitment to the welfare of our two peoples.

Long live to Benin and Japan friendship!

Long live to TICAD!

Long live to international solidarity!

Thank you.