

Sudan independence day

From peace to political openness and prosperity

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THE SUDAN

I would like, from the outset, to express my sincere warmest and respectful greetings, and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko on the occasion of the new year.



I am also glad that I can avail myself of this opportunity to wish the friendly people and government of the Land of the Rising Sun, a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

I would like also to felicitate, on my behalf and on behalf of my colleagues, our fellow compatriots of the Sudanese community of Japan on the occasion of the new year and on the auspicious occasion of the 58th anniversary of the National Day of the Sudan.

The year 2013 witnessed a very important rendezvous between Japan and the African continent on the occasion of the Fifth Summit of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), held in the beautiful city of Yokohama in

June. The conference was a good occasion for the delegation of the Sudan to meet with senior Japanese officials and representatives of the private sector, in view of consolidating and further enhancing bilateral relations.

The African leaders appreciated very much the new trend in the Japanese administration to devote more attention to economic and trade relations with Africa, and to increase Japanese investment in the continent. African delegations, including our own, pledged on their part to facilitate and further enhance the investment atmosphere in our countries so as to induce more Japanese private-sector companies to invest in Africa.

The Sudan has, in fact, introduced significant investment reforms during the last year, including preferential treatment for foreign investors, exempting capital goods from VAT and customs, lowering the corporate tax rate and improving the timeliness of customs clearances.

The newly adopted National Investment Encouragement 2013 Act centralizes the allocation of land through the National Investment Authority avoiding duplication with regional authorities. Articles 40 and 41 of the act establish new courts especially

for investment disputes.

The organization of the Japan-Arab Economic Forum in December 2013 was also another occasion for a delegation from the Sudan to display the potentialities of our country, an Afro-Arab and Middle Eastern country, in different economic sectors, including agriculture, agro-industries, mineral extraction, oil exploration, petrochemicals, construction of infrastructure projects, etc.

Sudan was occupied in its contemporary history of nation-building with the correlated issues of peace and development. Sudan attributes paramount importance to peace and stability as catalysts for development and prosperity. The country has sacrificed a dear part of its people, territory and resources, by the succession of South Sudan, for the sake of peace and stability.

As a new stage of political openness, the National Congress Party (NCP), the biggest political party in the ruling coalition, replaced its ministers with younger members of its leadership in December 2013. The changes include the two vice presidents, the speaker of the national assembly (parliament) and several key ministers. The government

is now initiating a broad-ranging political dialogue in view of drafting a new constitution or amending the Sudan's 2005 interim constitution adopted in the aftermath of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to pave the way for the 2015 presidential and legislative elections.

To maintain economic sustainability and to attenuate the negative repercussions of the loss of most of the oil revenues, Sudan is making use of its strategic location on the Red Sea and maximization of utilization of its rich natural resources.

New opportunities are offered for foreign investment in oil exploration in the remaining potential blocks in onshore and offshore areas. More attention is devoted to the agricultural sector to augment our traditional exports of cotton, sesame, groundnuts, Gum Arabic (acacia gum), sugar, hibiscus, oil seeds, fruits, vegetables, grains, pulses, livestock and leather to different destinations, including China, India, Egypt and rich countries in the Arab Peninsula as major trade partners.

A new Agricultural Renaissance (Revival) Strategy has been established to develop appropriate new methods in irrigation, agriculture, agro-industry, agri-

business and animal husbandry. The goals of "Elnahda-alzirayia," the new agricultural strategy, go beyond simple economic gains to address the questions of enhancing food security, alleviating poverty, building resilient societies, preserving the environment and combating desertification as an answer to climate change, hence accommodating many Japanese and international concerns.

As for tourism, we are proud to have observed a noticeable increase in the number of Japanese tourists visiting the Sudan during 2013. The Sudan, the land of old Nubia, the kingdom of Black Pharaohs, is endowed with many touristic sites and resources.

The National Archaeological Museum in the capital Khartoum contains many beautiful ancient Nubian objects, parts of two temples rescued by UNESCO and moved from the Lake Nubia area, and different sized statues of Black Pharaohs.

In the north, tourists can enjoy, along the charming Nile banks, visiting the sacred Jebel al-Barkal Mountain and its temple, and the marvellous pyramids of Meroe, located about 3 km from the Nile on some hills covered with yellow sand dunes. More than 40 pyramids stand out



Natural resources: (Above) The ancient kingdoms of Kush and Meroe, and the Nubian Desert of the north of the Sudan, which is known as the kingdom of Black Pharaohs, endow the country with many fascinating touristic sites. (Right) A gold refinery in the capital Khartoum is an example of the country's developing industrial base.

EMBASSY OF SUDAN



with their sharp shapes against the clear sky together with some small funerary temples with the walls fully decorated with bas-reliefs. The archaeological site of Musawwarat, the temple of Apademak and the Roman Kiosk Temple are more testimony of the richness of the Sudan's ancient history.

On the other hand, the Red Sea coast, gulfs and coral reefs,

which extend for more than 700 km, provide tourists with opportunities for diving, underwater photography, boating and water skiing. The travel and tourism industry is also attractive for Japanese investors.

In concluding these remarks, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the valuable Japanese technical assistance for the Sudan for the last

several years. Having visited the Sudan in April 2013, professor Akihiko Tanaka, president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), deserves special acknowledgement.

I would like also to thank The Japan Times for allowing me this great opportunity, and I would like to wish its administration and readers a Happy and Prosperous New Year.