

**President Mbeki's visit to Japan and Japan/ South Africa relations
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This speech was delivered at a SAIIA roundtable discussion, prior to President Mbeki's visit to Japan. The italicized information given in square brackets has been added subsequent to that visit and includes excerpts from the Joint Communique adopted on the 2nd October 2001 in Japan. A copy of the Communique is attached.

I. The partnership between Japan and South Africa

1. The absence of diplomatic relations for 50 years

President Mbeki will be visiting Japan from October 1 to 3. The Japanese Government attaches great importance to this event with the strong expectation that the President's visit will open a new chapter to further broaden and strengthen the partnership between the two countries. In particular, I have good reason to sincerely wish great success to this visit, because I declared directly to the President on the occasion of the credential ceremony held last March, that my immediate top agenda as the Ambassador of Japan would be the successful realization of the President's state visit to Japan.

Although the word "partnership" is popularly used to describe the friendly relations among countries, the use of "partnership" has a special significance for Japan/ South African relations due to their unique history. The feature of our bilateral relations in the past may be briefly described as the asymmetry between their economic relations and political ones. And such an asymmetry did not enable us to use the term "partnership".

As for economic relations, Japan has been a major trading partner of South Africa, ranked the top or second destination of South African exports all through the 1980s. Japan replaced, for instance, the US as the top trading partner of South Africa in 1987 by marking US\$ 4.3 billion for two-way trade. Though Japan is currently ranked as South Africa's fourth largest trade partner, this has not reduced her value as a major trading partner.

Turning to the political sphere, Japan and South Africa had no diplomatic relations, to our great surprise, for 50 years. Japan opened a consular office already in 1918 in Cape Town as the first government mission in the African continent, which was followed by the establishment of the embassy. However, due to the Second World War, the two governments severed diplomatic ties in 1942. While both governments were delayed in resuming diplomatic relations after the end of the war, the worsening of the political climate in South Africa made it difficult for the Japanese Government to bear the political cost of upgrading her General-Consulate office opened in Pretoria in 1952 to that of embassy status, despite various sincere attempts made by both sides to resume

diplomatic relations, including the provisional agreement to this effect reached by both governments in 1961. This rather unusual status of Japan in South Africa constitutes a clear contrast to other G7 countries which maintained diplomatic relations all the time or resumed them immediately after the War. Under these circumstances, it was only in 1992 after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison that Japan opened an embassy in Pretoria after a 50-year absence.

Even then, it required several years for both sides to recognize each other as important partners. In the early 1990s, South Africa prioritized domestic policy to secure her smooth transition as well as her external relations first with neighbouring African countries and then with European countries. She could not afford to pay enough diplomatic attention to Japan and other Asian countries. Japan also had not yet clearly defined her diplomatic policy towards Africa in terms of her over-all foreign policy at that stage, though she already emerged as a major ODA donor to Africa. It is noteworthy, however, that the groundwork for the partnership was steadily laid by such important steps as President Mandela's state visit to Japan in 1995 and the launching of the financial cooperation package amounting to US\$ 1.3 billion by Japan to South Africa.

As a result of these developments of bilateral relations, both governments used the term "partnership" for the first time in the official documents in 1998 when Vice President Mbeki paid an official visit to Japan. And it was also agreed on that occasion to establish a "Partnership Forum" as a ministerial level political dialogue. Thus behind the use of a simple word "partnership", there exists a 50-more year history of our relations. Once "partnership" relations were confirmed at the political level, the development of the very intense interaction over last three years is really remarkable. To name but a few, President Mbeki was invited to the North-South dialogue with the G8 leaders held in Tokyo before the Okinawa-Summit in July last year, and this was followed by the Genoa dialogue. This last January, Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori visited South Africa as the first country on the itinerary of the first ever official visit to Sub Saharan Africa by the incumbent Prime Minister of Japan. This is now very happily followed by the President's state visit to Japan. Thus the bilateral summit dialogue is held with such high intensity. With regards to the Partnership Forum, both governments wound up its 4th Meeting with very fruitful results last July. Turning to business to business cooperation, it is very welcome that the 1st Meeting of the Japan- South Africa Business Forum is to be held in Tokyo with the presence of Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin during the President's stay in Japan. This dialogue among influential top business leaders of the two countries is expected to be a powerful locomotive to boost trade and investment cooperation between Japan and South Africa.

2. Common grounds to sustain the Partnership

One question may arise. Why has the level and intensity of interaction under the Partnership developed so quickly over such a short term as 3 years?

An immediate answer to this is that both sides have deepened their respective recognition about the importance of the other side. For the importance of South Africa, we can very easily enumerate various factors, such as the regional economic super power

sharing 40% of the total Sub-Saharan GDP, the major political leader of Africa and the major player in the multilateral diplomacy, among many others. As for the value of Japan, we can again quote several points, such as the global economic super power, the world top ODA donor, the leading country of Asia, the major political player as a G8 member state, etc.

I suppose, however, that this way of answering is not enough to explain the solid basis of the Japan/South Africa Partnership. The most important point is, in my view, the existence of common ground generated by the similarities between the two countries. Both Japan, until recently, and South Africa are the only developed economies in their respective regions. This inevitably obliges each of us to take initiative for the development of the respective entire region, because isolated prosperity can not be sustained for the long run. While flexing our muscles in the region to this end, both of us should be mindful of the delicate psychology of our neighbours deriving from the negative legacy of the past, memories of WWII for Japan and those of Apartheid for South Africa.

Furthermore, both of us have been challenged by the need to harmonize Westernization with the preservation of our traditional cultures. In South Africa, this process appears in your efforts in harmonizing a multi-cultural society, especially White Western value systems with Black traditional value systems. In the case of Japan, her century-long modern history has included the process of harmonizing the absorption of the Western system and the preservation of deep-rooted traditional values. And Japan has been successful in creating her own identity in this process, while South Africa is likewise attempting this now.

Thus Japan and South Africa both stand with one foot in each two worlds. For Japan, one foot is in Asia, while the other is in the Western World or the Global World. For South Africa, one foot is in Africa, while the other is in the Western/Global World. While Japan stands more on the G8 side and South Africa stands more on the OAU or Non-Alignment side, both Japan and South Africa share the same role to bridge the North and the South. I believe that this unique common ground between our two countries constitutes a very solid basis to sustain the Japan/South Africa Partnership.

II. President Mbeki's visit and the future prospect of the Japan/South Africa Partnership

As I mentioned earlier, the framework of the "Partnership" was constructed at the political level, and the target to be aimed for by the President's visit this time will be to further broaden and strengthen the foundation to sustain the "Partnership" and to demonstrate to the people of both countries concrete steps for implementing the "Partnership". Now I wish to scrutinize with you these possible steps in various fields.

1. Multi-lateral diplomacy

There are so many relevant subjects of the multilateral diplomacy for both of us to work together for bridging the North and the South. These include, for example, the reform of

the UN Security Council, WTO's new round, Arms Control, Human Security, and the Environment, which will be discussed in the forthcoming Johannesburg Summit, among many others. During President Mbeki's upcoming visit, the Japanese side will propose to set up a dialogue framework at a high official level to discuss and explore ways and means for our joint collaboration about various agenda relating to the UN.

2. African diplomacy (NAI and TICAD)

One of the priority topics for the Mbeki/ Koizumi summit talks will no doubt be the possible collaboration between both sides about the New African Initiative (NAI) and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). In December, Japan will host the TICAD ministerial level meeting in Tokyo to review the past achievements as well as to prepare for the TICAD III to be held most probably in 2003. One of the top items on the agenda will be NAI. Though Africa has many dialogue channels with the US, EU, G8, etc, all these are forums with a specific or a limited number of partners. In this sense, TICAD is the only forum where every member of the international community can be represented. I believe that the forthcoming TICAD Ministerial level meeting will be the most appropriate forum for the international community to come together to deliberate on NAI. The timing of the upcoming visit of the President is very meaningful for both of us to discuss about possible linkage between NAI and TICAD, because this timing is the mid-point between the Genoa Summit and the TICAD December Meeting.

It was during the North-South dialogue with the G8 leaders in Tokyo last year which allowed for the first international deliberation to the MAP (NAI). Japan also hosted the first international seminar on the MAP (NAI) with President Obasanjo of Nigeria as a keynote speaker last May. Thus Japan has been extending her consistent support to NAI. The major reason of Japan's strong support for NAI can be explained by the fact that the basic thought of NAI structured upon the ownership of Africans themselves is in the same line with that of TICAD, which appeals to the importance of ownership. The basic aid philosophy of Japan has been fostered from her experiences in assisting Asia which is the main recipient of Japan's ODA. Japan considers that donors and recipients should stand on equal footing and that the only difference between the two is that of the speed of the development process. Accordingly, our approach under the TICAD framework is that development aid should not be carried out as a charity from the rich to the poor, but instead on the principle of the ownership of the recipient side and the partnership of the donor side. Japan welcomes the NAI initiative with the recognition that NAI is the first development strategy prepared and presented to the international community by Africans themselves and that this is the most manifest demonstration of the African will to exercise her own ownership for her development. Thus I believe that the cooperation between NAI and TICAD is the priority subject symbolizing the partnership between our two countries.

[Both countries re-affirmed their conviction that African development should recognise the principles of Africa's "ownership of solutions" and "partnership with the international community." They welcomed the fact that the Millenium Africa Recovery Program/New African Initiative" (MAP/NAI), adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Summit Meeting in July 2001, emphasized the principles of democracy, good governance and

sustainable development. Japan expressed its intention to actively support this initiative through the TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) process - in cooperation with other G8 countries. Japan proposed that the MAP/NAI should be one of the central themes to be discussed at the TICAD Ministerial Level Meeting in Tokyo scheduled in December 2001. South Africa expressed its appreciation of Japan's leading role in calling the attention of the international community to African issues through the TICAD and the G8 summit processes and both countries expressed their trust that the international community to African issues through the TICAD and the G8 summit processes and both countries expressed their trust that the international community would heed the call to contribute towards the development of Africa – Paragraph 10, Joint Communique.]

(African dialogue)

Japan has manifested, in Prime Minister Mori's policy speech delivered in South Africa this last January, her basic policy toward Africa that Japan will do her utmost to cooperate with Africa for the solution of African problems through development assistance and contributions for peace making and relief of refugees, as two wheels of the cart. For effectively pursuing this goal, Japan, which is short of sufficient experiences in Africa, needs valuable cooperation and advice from South Africa which is the leading country of the region. Japan also desires to exchange views with South Africa on a number of important topics such as the transformation from the OAU to the AU and regional cooperation in Africa among many others. Thus Japan would like to propose the setting up of a high official level consultation about Africa between our two countries.

(Cooperation for SADC)

Among various regional organizations in Africa, Japan is paying particular attention to SADC which has a strong locomotive, namely South Africa. It is really needless to say that any regional cooperation without a locomotive member state does not effectively work. SADC also embraces many countries known for their good governance, including Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Mozambique and naturally South Africa. Therefore Japan now attaches great importance to the sound development of SADC cooperation. Thus Japan has extended assistance in a number of forms, including voluntary financial contributions and dispatching an economist to the secretariat as a permanent basis adviser. Japan has also an annual consultation channel with SADC. While extending her ODA, Japan attaches great importance to regional projects which could contribute to the development of the SADC region as a whole. With such a basic thought in mind, Japan is now assisting five regional projects which includes the Swazi Northern Trunk Road Construction as a part of the "Maputo Corridor", The Chirundu Bridge Construction and the Kazungula Bridge Construction. Japan is of the view that close collaboration with South Africa is also the key to the successful cooperation for SADC.

Besides Government to Government cooperation, private sector cooperation is also crucially important. An example of this is the MOZAL aluminium smelter project in which South African based Billiton, SA IDC, Japanese Mitsubishi Corporation and the Mozambique government are participating as share holders. This one project alone now contributes 7% of Mozambique's entire GDP. The participation of SA-based trust-worthy

corporations as a main organizer in the project is one of the key factors for Japanese business, who are short of experience and knowledge in this region, to make decisions upon their investment. Thus triangular cooperation of private sector with South Africa as a pivot has a strong impact for the increased inflow of foreign direct investment to the SADC region.

3. Bilateral relations

There are four major areas of bilateral relations on which both sides would like to focus. These are;

- 1) Mutual visits by high level delegations
- 2) People to people exchange
- 3) Political dialogue and intellectual exchange
- 4) Business cooperation and technological exchange

I shall now briefly discuss these topics.

(Mutual visits by high level delegations)

The current relationship between our countries, as reflected by the frequent visits made at high levels, is extremely good. Since 1994 we have received, on average, three to four SA cabinet ministers in Japan, and vice versa. President Mbeki's visit to Japan this October comes hot on the heels of Prime Minister Mori's visit to South Africa in this last January, and our foreign ministers have also had several opportunities to meet each other. We would like to see this level of interaction continuing further.

One of my major concerns is that as of yet, no member of the Japanese imperial family has ever visited South Africa. Since President Mandela's state visit to Japan, a kind invitation to visit South Africa has been repeatedly extended to His Majesty Emperor from the South African side. The Japanese imperial system is the world's longest hereditary monarch system, and can be traced back to the 6th century at least. All through its 14 century history, no emperor has yet come to the African continent. It would be no doubt an epoch-making event for our bilateral relations, if the Emperor's visit to Africa could be realized. When this event takes place, his first stop should be South Africa. Though a prime minister is the top political leader in the Japanese system, the Emperor's foreign visit has the paramount positive impact, second to none, on the Japanese public image towards the country being visited.

[President Mbeki renewed an invitation to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress to visit South Africa – Paragraph 2, Joint Communique.]

Even if the Emperor's visit could not be arranged immediately, a visit by a certain prince of the imperial family is very much awaited. Though nine Sub-Saharan countries have received Japanese princes in the past, none of the members of the imperial family has yet visited South Africa. There were good reasons for this before 1994. However, as an Ambassador, I have good hope to realize such a visit of a prince in the near future.

(People to people exchange)

While welcoming the firm commitment made at the high political level for the furtherance of our bilateral relations, the people to people level grass-root foundation is yet to be sufficiently developed. As I said earlier, our two countries had no diplomatic relations over 50 years until quite recently. And restrictive measures controlling exchange between two peoples, in such various areas as culture, sports and academics, were removed only after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. The lack of historic stock of people to people contacts is undeniable.

Comparing this with the case of Japan-Ghana relations, Japan has more than a 40-year history of diplomatic relations with Ghana since her establishment of an embassy in 1959. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has received 20000 African youth on a cumulative basis as trainees in Japan under the technical cooperation scheme. 1400 of these are from Ghana. From Japan to Ghana also, 1200 experts and volunteers have been dispatched and stayed in this country. Ghana is also sending many students to study at Japanese universities averaging on 70 to 80 students annually, which is the largest number from African countries.

Accordingly our real challenge is how to promote in a massive way people to people exchange. This may require a much longer time to achieve than high level leaders exchange, while fulfilling the vacuum of 50 years.

However, we already have a good foundation and a number of encouraging achievements to rapidly enhance our massive exchange. A great asset for our relations is the existence of a very positive and amicable general image which each people is respectively holding about another people. In Sub Saharan Africa, South Africa is home to the largest number of Japanese residents and there are about 24000 Japanese tourists who visit the country annually.

Regarding youth exchange, which is a key to long term bilateral ties, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme is an excellent opportunity. The aim of this programme is to invite foreign youth to teach English or other foreign languages at high schools in Japan. Actually more than 6000 young people are staying under this programme throughout Japan, from the cities to the countryside, and are learning about Japanese culture as well. Though South Africa has participated in this programme only since 1997, as the only country from Africa, the number of South Africans has been steadily increased to the 33 who are currently on the programme, a larger number than those from Germany or France.

It is also noteworthy that the two governments concluded the bilateral agreement about the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers programme last January. Under this programme, the first batch of Japanese youth volunteers will be sent to South Africa sometime in the middle of next year.

Until my assignment here, I did not know that Karate martial arts has the third largest sporting population after rugby and soccer in this country. I am happy to note that Ikebana, Japanese flower arrangement, is also a very popular art in South Africa. While music is a global common language, mutual exchange of musicians between our countries is becoming more and more frequent. Thus the importance of cultural exchange can not be underestimated.

(Political dialogue and intellectual exchange)

The "Partnership Forum" has been well established as a main vehicle for our political dialogue. Our future task will be to extend the dialogue net to cover many relevant individual sectors, further developing the "Partnership Forum" as an umbrella scheme. Japan and the EU have in total 26 consultation and dialogue fora covering almost every necessary subject. The EU's case apart, there is much room for both of us to start more sector specific consultation mechanisms. With this thought in mind, Japan will propose to set up, to begin with, two dialogue channels about UN and Africa respectively, as I mentioned earlier.

[Within this framework, the two countries decided to consult regularly at senior officials' level on global issues such as UN reform, the environment, disarmament and non-proliferation, food safety and human security, as well as on problems facing Africa such as conflict and refugees – Paragraph 15, Joint Communiqué.]

Holding Government to Government dialogue as the first track, exchange between research institutes or think tanks is as vitally important as the second track to feed intellectual inputs to the policy making process. Our Embassy has been discussing with SAIIA the possibility to establish intellectual exchange networks with Japanese corresponding institutes through organizing joint seminars or joint research.

(Business cooperation and technological exchange)

It is scheduled to launch the first round of Japan/SA Business Forum in Tokyo during the President Mbeki's visit. The South African side is represented by Mr. Leslie Boyd as chairman and Mr. Tokyo Sexwale as vice chairman, while the Japanese side is represented by Mr. Anzaki as chairman who is also chairman of the African committee of the KEIDANREN (the Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations). South Africa became the 12th business dialogue partner for the KEIDANREN and this can be considered as a reflection of recognition by the Japanese business circle about the importance of South Africa as a business partner. It is expected that closer relations between our two business circles supported by the Business Forum dialogue will generate more increased trade and investment achievement between our countries.

Turning to scientific and technological exchange, it is expected that our two Governments will agree to start negotiations to conclude the Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement. After the initiative taken by the Minister of Science and Technology, Dr Ben Ngubane, for the conclusion of the agreement during his visit to Japan last year, both sides have been seriously studying the possibility. If this agreement would be concluded, this will be the first agreement with African countries. I hope that the agreement will be an

excellent instrument to further boost mutually beneficial cooperation in scientific and technological fields between our two countries.

[Welcoming progress on bilateral cooperation in the area of science and technology, both Governments decided to start negotiations with a view to concluding an agreement on science and technology cooperation. They also shared the view that the conclusion of the first ever agreement on science and technology cooperation, based on the principle of equality and mutual benefit between Japan and an African country would be of great significance – Paragraph 16, Joint Communiqué.]

Finally, regarding Government to Government economic cooperation, the Japanese Government presented to the South African Government a US\$1.5 billion financial cooperation package for five years (1999-2004), roughly composed of US\$1 billion for non-concessional loans and US\$500 million for Official Development Assistance, including US\$100 million for grant financial assistance. I wish to happily note that a large part of this package has been effectively disbursed for the economic and social development of South Africa. For instance, I attended the Exchange of Notes ceremony held in Cape Town last month for the extension of Grant Aid amounting to approximately R100 million for the construction of schools in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal Province.

In concluding my speech, I wish to reiterate that Japan and South Africa have much in common, and working together and collaborating, can achieve much to better the conditions of the north- south divide. I am very much looking forward to President Mbeki's visit as the vitally important step for broadening and strengthening the foundation of Japan/South Africa Partnership.