

**Message from H.E. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, in
Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Organization of
African Unity (OAU) / African Union (AU)**

May 25, 2013

Your Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Chairperson of the African Union,
Your Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African
Union Commission,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government and Heads of Delegations of
Member States of the African Union,

50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU

I extend my heartfelt congratulations on the 50th Anniversary of the
Organization of African Unity (OAU)/African Union (AU).

Back in 1963, amid the cold war, having at last earned independence after a long
and hard history of colonization, the states of Africa, upon establishing a new
era, chose the road to unity and solidarity. While Africa, influenced by the
whirlwinds of the international society, was facing many challenges such as
conflicts and poverty even after independence, this decision gave the continent
the necessary strength and wisdom to overcome these difficulties and put itself
on a forward trajectory. No strength is as steadfast and unwavering as that
generated by unity and solidarity. Being a nation that values harmony and has
historically achieved development driven by unity, Japan knows this better than
any other country. I pay tribute to the efforts of the forerunners in Africa who
made this great decision half a century ago in Ethiopia, as well as the African
leaders who have continuously inherited this tradition to this day.

Half a century has passed since then. Having overcome a number of difficulties
and made continuous progress under the spirit of unity and solidarity, Africa has
now become the most vibrant and promising continent, bringing vigor and hope
to the world. OAU/AU has transformed its role in line with the times, growing
to become the heart of Africa and leading the continent through this new era. As
a country that has worked closely with Africa, we are truly pleased to see the
continent making a new start as a source of bright inspiration and hope for the
world.

Relationship between Japan and Africa

During the past half-century, Japan has always stood alongside Africa. Five
decades ago, Japan, having overcome the post-war confusion, was upholding its
income-doubling plan and striving to achieve growth within the international

community. In 1966, Japan dispatched to Kenya its first Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) to Africa. In the years since, over 14,000 Japanese volunteers, including senior volunteers have served under the JOCV program as symbols of grassroots interaction and cooperation between Japan and Africa. To this day, Japan's tradition of cherishing direct interpersonal exchange in its diplomatic relationship with Africa has been passed down, fostering a warm and strong bond between Japan and the continent. When Japan was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, we received warm support and condolences from African countries. We were deeply touched to reaffirm the bond fostered between us over the long period of time. Currently, seven young African volunteers are serving in the areas afflicted by the earthquake, engaging and interacting with the local people. I am pleased to see the Japan-Africa exchange based on the spirit of mutual support firmly taking root and blossoming.

The year 2013 is also the 20th anniversary of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process, which was launched and fostered by Japan in collaboration with African countries under the unique principles of ownership and partnership. I am delighted and proud that the TICAD process has grown to become one of the world's largest international forums on African development. I am convinced that the coming fifth TICAD (TICAD V), to be held from June 1 in Yokohama, will serve as a desirable occasion for reviewing TICAD's 20-year history and the progress of the Japan-Africa relationship over the past half-century, as well as for opening up a new chapter in the history of dynamic Africa. In the coming new era, we are tasked with the responsibility of making full use of the boundless energy unleashed by African forerunners in order to achieve further growth for the region and the world. I look forward to holding serious discussions with the heads of African states, the drivers of global growth, on the future of Africa and the world, and delivering to the international community a strong message of determination to achieve further growth.

There is a saying that goes "those who drink African water will return to Africa". Although it has been over 10 years since my last visit, I sincerely hope to return to Africa, the continent of hope, which has taken a tremendous step forward over the past decade.

Shinzo Abe
Prime Minister of Japan