

Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan
at the meeting with the leaders from ECOWAS countries

H.E. Mr. Ouattara, the President of the Republic of Cote
d'Ivoire,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely appreciate many African leaders, especially from West Africa, for participating in TICADV held last June. This is exactly why I thought of visiting West Africa when I was to make my first step to the African continent, and I am deeply grateful that my wish has come true in only half a year since my promise at TICADV. Above all, I would like to offer my sincere thank you to President Ouattara for giving me this great opportunity to meet so many leaders who are present here today.

I heard that the summit meeting to celebrate the 20th anniversary of UEMOA was scheduled for today. I thank you so much for rescheduling the meeting for my visit. Let me sincerely congratulate all of you on the 20 years of progress of integration of West Africa.

I will touch on my big hope that I have for the dynamic West Africa at the formal banquet.

This time, many Japanese business leaders are accompanying me to Cote d'Ivoire in the hope of seeing and reaffirming how the West African market of 300 million people is changing and whether now is the time to invest or not.

I vividly remember that all of you appealed your strong will to promote private business with Japan at TICADV. Japanese companies responded with their requests for African efforts in infrastructure development, human resources development, rule of law and political stability. The Government of Japan is immediately undertaking its support for these.

Let me also mention the issue of peace and stability. There still remain conflicts and confrontations in today's world. Japan, hand-in-hand with friends from West Africa, would like to build a world of peace and prosperity, as well as a world where each and every individual can live in a better environment, a world ruled by law and not by the use of force. I would like to walk together with all of you to realize such a world.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me take this opportunity and open the floor to listen to your vision of how you will make West Africa a more attractive region for investment.

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