

## BIG READ / 60TH ANNIVERSARY

# JAPAN-KENYA: CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF FRUITFUL COOPERATION



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida gave the Star an exclusive interview

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during a press conference at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo, Japan, on August 10, 2022 /XINHUA

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Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Kenya yesterday for a summit meeting with President William Ruto to discuss a wide range of regional and international issues.

These include Ukraine and bilateral relations. To mark the 60th anniversary of Japan-Kenya diplomatic relations, the Star interviewed Prime Minister Kishida about the purpose of his visit to Kenya.

**What is the purpose and significance of your visit to Kenya?**

It is my great pleasure to visit Kenya on the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kenya after seven years since TICAD 6 in Nairobi, where I participated as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

During my visit, I would like to listen to Kenya's views as a country contributing to peace and stability in the East African region and address

various challenges in the international arena, and consider them in the discussions at the upcoming G7 Hiroshima Summit.

I would also like to reaffirm the importance of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" with President William Ruto, who took office following democratic elections last September, and strengthen cooperation.

We appreciate Kenya's contribution to peace and stability in the region, which is placed at a strategic location in East Africa. I look forward to working closely with Kenya to ensure an immediate cessation of violence and humanitarian access in Sudan, where the situation is deteriorating.

At TICAD 8 held last August, Japan expressed its commitment to cooperate with Africa as a "partner growing together with Africa" to realise the resilience that Africa itself aims for. Kenya is the economic hub of the East African region, and we hope to further expand our economic rela-

tions. Under the current severe and complex international situation such as the Russian aggression against Ukraine, it is all the more important to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Kenya has raised its voice together with us for the thorough enforcement of the rule of law. I look forward to discussing a wide range of

issues with President Ruto.

**What are the prospects for economic relations between Japan and Kenya?**

Kenya is one of the leading hubs of Japanese companies in Africa, with more than 100 companies operating in the country. Japanese start-ups are also active in Kenya to solve social issues through innovation.

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*Large-scale projects have played major roles in raising the standard of living and creating jobs for Kenyans, and the number of Japanese companies operating in Kenya has doubled since my last visit in 2016*

The Government of Japan will support Japanese companies, including start-ups, to participate in the Kenyan market as well as support collaboration between Kenyan and Japanese companies.

A large-scale data centre is planned to be developed by a Japanese company, which will be a base for strengthening ICT infrastructure in Africa.

In addition, Japan attaches importance to "investment in people". In order to realise raising the level of industry in Kenya, Japan and Kenya will cooperate in the "Project on Human Resource Development for Industrial Development" and the "Africa-Japan Industrial Human Resource Development Initiative for the Future (AffF)" in Kenya, as expressed at TICAD 8.

At TICAD 6 held in Nairobi in 2016, then Prime Minister Abe first proposed the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). Kenya is home to the Port of Mombasa, a strategic point on the East Africa Northern Corri-

dor whose development Japan has actively supported.

To promote the new FOIP plan announced in March, we also would like to promote concrete cooperation in maritime security and infrastructure development in and around the port.

Furthermore, during TICAD 8, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the companies and the government agencies of both countries regarding efforts in the areas of solar power generation, green hydrogen, and geothermal power generation.

We would like to promote cooperation between our two countries to realise a more realistic energy transition in line with the actual situation in Kenya.

**On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kenya, please tell us about the cordial relationship between the two countries over the past 60 years as well as the future prospects, including this year.**

Large-scale projects, such as the Mombasa Port Development Project and Olkaria Geothermal Power Plant Development, have played major roles in raising the standard of living and creating jobs for Kenyans, and the number of Japanese companies operating in Kenya has doubled since my last visit in 2016.

However, I would like to emphasise that the relationship between Japan and Kenya is diverse and goes beyond economic ties. One such area is human resource development.

Japan has supported research institutions such as Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Kenya Medical Research Institute (Kemri), and Kenya Forestry Research Institute (Kefri). Japan has also hosted 15,061 JICA trainees from Kenya, and 1,757 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) have been dispatched from Japan.

Grassroots exchanges are also thriving. Dr Wangari Maathai, who spread the Japanese word "Mottainai", which expresses the recycling spirit of Japanese culture throughout the world, has contributed to the international community through Japan-Kenya cooperation in the environmental field.

Dr Miriam Were, a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022, has deepened bilateral cooperation and exchange on maternal and child health through the dissemination of the "Maternal and Child Health Handbook".

Kenya's world-class marathoner Eliud Kipchoge served as an ambassador for a Japanese company. Renowned marathon runner Douglas Wakiihuri rose in prominence as a member of a Japanese company team, reaching the highest level in the world. Exchanges between our two countries continue to be very active.

As you can see, the relationship between Japan and Kenya, with its diverse and deep history, has been sustained by the ties between our two peoples.

We hope to continue to further deepen the relationship between our two countries while borrowing the strength of our ties.



Japanese Ambassador Ken Okaniwa drinks water from a project set up by Yamaha Motors and the Japan Embassy at Seka Mixed Secondary School in Karachuonyo constituency on April 4 / ROBERT OMOLLO



Japanese Ambassador Ken Okaniwa, Homa Bay Governor Gladys Wanga and Busia Governor Paul Otuoma at St John's Seka Mixed Secondary School in Karachuonyo constituency on April 4 / ROBERT OMOLLO