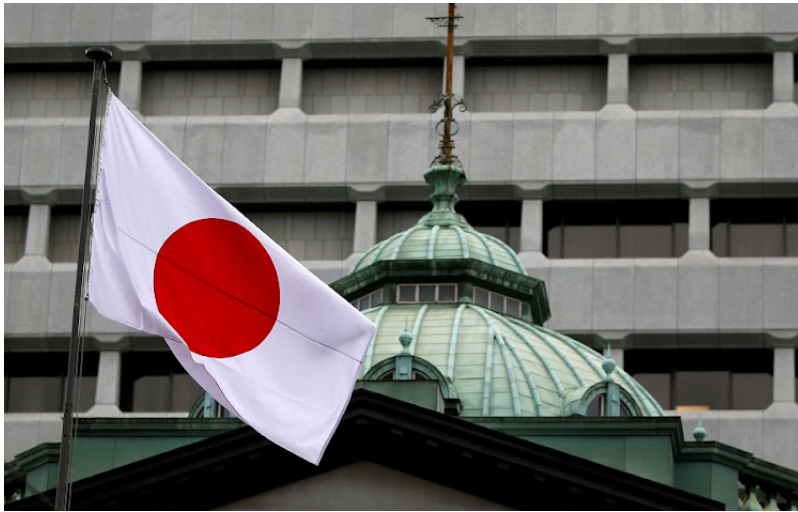


■ OPINION

YOSHIMASA HAYASHI: Japan and Africa should work together to uphold free global order

As the continent might become a future Ukraine, co-operation is needed to halt Russia's aggression as soon as possible

📅 01 AUGUST 2023 - 05:00 by YOSHIMASA HAYASHI



Picture: REUTERS/TORU HANAI

Having long been keen to visit SA, I am deeply moved to be able to pay a call on the Rainbow Nation while we are standing at one of the major turning points of history, to further strengthen the bonds between our two countries that have been built up over many years.

Japan and SA have a big role to play in the international community. Japan, which has recovered from the devastation of World War 2, and SA, which has overcome apartheid and achieved harmonious coexistence among diverse racial and ethnic groups, are both important players in maintaining international order as the basis for peace, stability and prosperity, and our collaboration is essential.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a violent act that disdains international order based on the rule of law. A peaceful, stable international community cannot be achieved if unilateral changes to the status quo by force are tolerated. This is not simply a European problem; Ukraine now may be a future East Asia or Africa. With this sense of urgency, Japan and SA must work to halt this aggression as soon as possible.

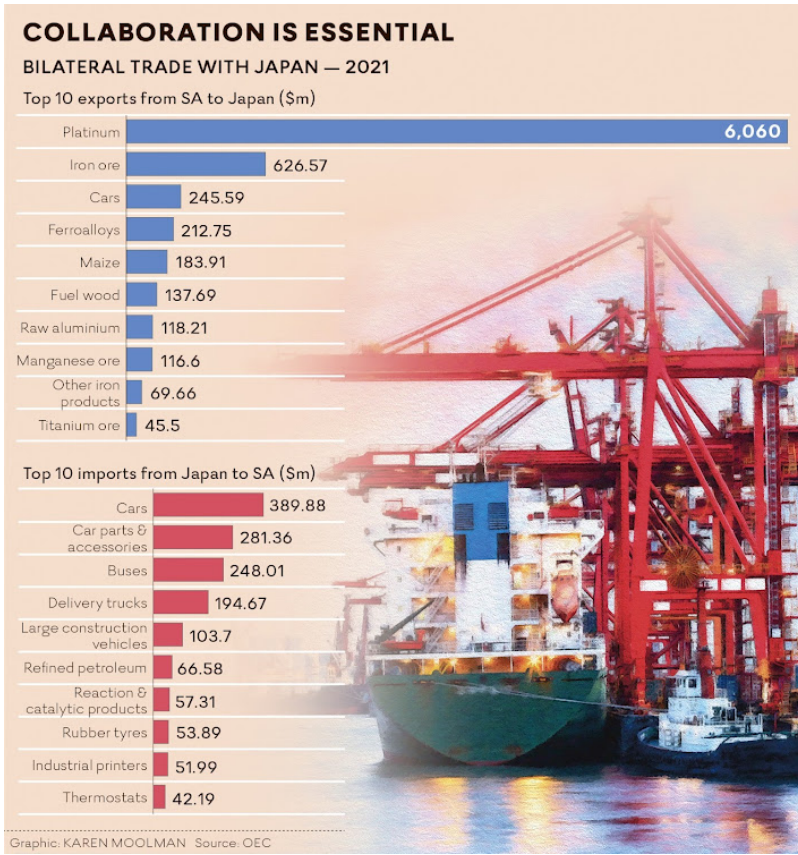
Japan, as the G7 chair, listened carefully to the "voices" of African countries and issued a strong message to uphold a free, open international order based on the rule of law. SA also led the Ukraine Peace Mission and is seriously committed to restoring peace in Ukraine.

The invasion of Ukraine has also caused a food crisis and high fertiliser prices, which have had a significant impact on African countries. We consider the termination of the Black Sea Grain Initiative by Russia to be extremely regrettable, as it worsens this situation. We would like to work together to make Russia return to the international framework and to resume grain exports from Ukraine.

Rooibos tea

Given their respective histories, Japan and SA are keenly aware of the importance of peace and security, and understand that international order based on the rule of law is indispensable for this purpose. This order must not be allowed to be threatened by unilateral changes to the status quo by force. It is important that both our countries work hand in hand to achieve this. It is essential that Russia withdraws in less than no time to achieve a just, lasting peace in Ukraine, and we would like to co-operate with African countries, including SA.

In terms of bilateral economic relations, Japan is SA's fifth-largest export partner. Japanese companies have established 266 business operations in SA, making it one of its major economic centres in Africa. In recent years, towards the realisation of decarbonisation, a common challenge for all humanity, Japan and SA have deepened their co-operation in areas such as hydrogen, which contributes to the energy transition. Additionally, a number of Japanese companies continue to have a strong interest in SA, which is rich in key minerals necessary for the energy transition. Furthermore, imports of rooibos tea from SA have recently increased rapidly.



In the manufacturing sector, many Japanese companies, such as car manufacturers and automotive parts suppliers, have invested in SA and have been active in local production, contributing to industrial development and employment growth. Some companies are contributing to the development of SA not only through economic relations, but also by establishing academies for vocational training, to develop human resources in the manufacturing sector, and to support the future careers of those involved.

In addition to strengthening relations in these economic fields, Japan intends to promote co-operation with SA in science and technology and academic exchange. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), a conference on African development launched by Japan and Africa in 1993, just after the Cold War, and that was the first of its kind. Japan will continue to work towards realising a more multilayered co-operative relationship, based on the principle of *kizuna* (bonds of friendship) between our two countries.

One of those who helped to forge these bonds was Frene Ginwala, the first speaker of the National Assembly of SA, who sadly passed away in January, and who was instrumental in the development of TICAD. Ginwala also did much to promote the concept of human security. In an increasingly uncertain international situation, a people-focused approach to human security that protects people’s lives, livelihoods and dignity so that they are not under threat, is increasingly important. I would like to pay tribute to her for the tremendous efforts she made in developing SA and strengthening relations between Japan and SA.

At last year’s TICAD meeting, our two countries committed to growing together with an approach that focuses on people. Now, when the international community is at a turning point, we believe that it is important to strengthen *kizuna* between Japan and SA and the people of our countries, who share values and principles such as democracy and the rule of law.

- *Hayashi is Japan’s minister of foreign affairs.*

BDTV

[Read more →](#)

