

# **Shaping the Future of Japan-Africa Relations through a Free and Open Indo-Pacific**

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Hamjambo.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Kenya for the warm welcome extended during my visit, as well as to GLOCEPS and all those involved for providing us with this valuable opportunity.

I am told that there is a Swahili saying: "Milima haikutani lakini binadamu hukutana"—"Mountains do not meet, but people do." The reason I am able to stand before you today is that I, one individual from Japan, crossed the Pacific and Indian Oceans with a spirit of friendship, arrived here, and was warmly welcomed by the people of Kenya and Africa, who hold a deep interest in and affection for Japan.

With these feelings of gratitude, today I would like to share my thoughts on Japan's fundamental diplomatic vision, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), and in particular on Japan's diplomacy towards Africa, which occupies a vital place within that vision.

## **1. The Updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)**

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) came into being exactly ten years ago, here in Kenya. In August 2016, at TICAD 6—the first TICAD ever held on African soil—the late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivered a historic address at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi.

In that speech, he declared a vision that viewed the two great oceans—the Pacific and the Indian—connecting the continents of Africa and Asia as a single, integrated space. Anchored in the core principles of freedom,

openness, diversity, inclusiveness, and the rule of law, this vast region, which is home to over half of the world's population and nearly 60 percent of global GDP, was envisioned as a place where people would meet, cooperate, and together build peace and prosperity for the future international community.

Since then, this vision has experienced multiple stages of development and has grown into a pillar of Japanese diplomacy. The United States and many other countries, as well as regions such as the European Union and ASEAN, have also announced their own initiatives related to the Indo-Pacific. Today, it has become a widely shared understanding within the international community that maintaining and expanding a free and open international order across this region—stretching from Asia to Africa—is key to peace and prosperity for the international community in the future.

Today, the world is facing a period of significant transformation. Intensifying geopolitical competition, accelerating technological innovation, and the rise of the Global South—including Africa, with its strong economic growth alongside growing social challenges—demonstrate that the issues facing the international community are more diverse and serious than ever before.

In light of these challenges, Prime Minister TAKAICHI, during her visit to Vietnam, delivered a speech yesterday announcing that Japan is updating FOIP to meet the challenges of the times.

In short, the key point of this update is that, amid an increasingly severe international environment, it is essential for countries to acquire “resilience” and the capability to have the freedom to decide for themselves in order to maintain and reinforce a free and open international order. To

this end, Japan will work hand in hand with countries and regions across all fields, including economic, social and security domains, to provide necessary support and cooperation.

The core principles that underpin FOIP—"freedom," "openness," "diversity," "inclusiveness," and "the rule of law"—remain unchanged.

Building on this foundation, the updated FOIP will, in line with the changing times, focus on initiatives such as strengthening the resilience of supply chains for critical materials as well as new economic infrastructure for the age of AI and data, including submarine cables and data centers; achieving economic growth through public-private cooperation to address social challenges; and enhancing capabilities and strengthening cooperation in the security domain.

At the same time, Japan will continue to prioritize areas it has long emphasized, such as enhancing connectivity and developing rules to promote free trade and investment. Through these efforts, we hope to provide further opportunities for peace and prosperity across the African continent, to pass on a brighter future to the next generation, and for Japan and Africa to become more "resilient and prosperous together."

## **2. Three Pillars of Japan's Africa Diplomacy**

Now, under this FOIP vision, what specific form of Africa diplomacy should Japan pursue?

I intend to actively advance Japan's Africa diplomacy around three pillars: first, "Realizing a Continent of Peace in Africa"; second, "Creating a Virtuous Cycle of Growth between Africa and Japan"; and third, "Realizing a Society where Everyone Can Genuinely Feel Prosperity, through Empowering Young-Generation Co-Creation."

## **(1) Realizing a Continent of Peace in Africa**

First, “Realizing a Continent of Peace in Africa.” Japan will stand alongside African countries that have endured the sorrow of repeated civil wars and atrocities, and will cooperate in promoting peace and stability across Africa, drawing on Japan’s own experience of rising from the devastation of World War II.

To date, Japan has supported the development of human resources that contribute to protecting Africa’s peace and stability, through the provision of a total of 75 million US dollars and the dispatching of more than 240 instructors to PKO training centers in fourteen African countries, .

Institutions supported by Japan include the International Peace Support Training Centre here in Kenya, as well as centers in Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Benin, Djibouti, Cameroon, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo, Guinea, and South Africa.

Japan also continues to support peace and stability in Somalia through the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). We have also sent staff officers to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) remains ongoing.

In addition, Japan introduced a new cooperation program called, Official Security Assistance (OSA), in 2023, and one of its first projects has been implemented in Djibouti. We are currently coordinating to partner with Kenya in this program.

Furthermore, preventing conflicts and ensuring early resolutions of conflicts are indispensable to realizing a continent of peace. With this in mind, the Government of Japan instituted a new International Peace Mediation Unit this March. Through this initiative, Japan intends to engage

more proactively and flexibly in promoting peace and stability around the world, including in Africa.

We also hope to deepen cooperation with Africa on United Nations Security Council reform, so that the Council, which bears primary responsibility for international peace and security, can truly reflect the realities of today's international community.

## **(2) Creating a Virtuous Cycle of Growth for Africa and Japan**

The second pillar, "Creating a Virtuous Cycle of Growth between Africa and Japan," seeks to have Africa and Japan join forces to generate momentum for economic growth.

To achieve this, we will begin by nurturing technology and human capital. For example, Toyota has established a manufacturing base in Durban, South Africa; Isuzu in Nairobi, Kenya; and Saraya in Jinja, Uganda. Together, these investments have created up to 9,000 local jobs, while delivering high-quality products based on Japanese technology not only to African markets but also to the world.

New Japanese initiatives are also making progress, including startup support through the "Japan Africa Co-Creation for Industry" as well as programs to train 30,000 AI personnel over three years.

At the same time, for the waves of economic growth emerging across Africa to become a powerful surge that nourishes the entire continent, it is essential that the vitality of each country flows freely and becomes firmly interconnected, within Africa and beyond.

To this end, Japan announced the "Economic Region Initiative of Indian Ocean-Africa" at TICAD 9 last year, aimed at advancing Africa's

economic integration, industrial development, and connectivity within and beyond the region.

Under this initiative, Japan will support the development of transport networks and the strengthening of import-export hubs throughout Africa, including the East Africa Northern Corridor starting from the Port of Mombasa, the Nacala Corridor starting from the Port of Nacala in Mozambique, and the West Africa Growth Ring connecting countries such as Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, thereby building the foundations that support logistics and the movement of people.

We will also continue cooperation toward the realization of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

On my way to Kenya, I visited Zambia and Angola, and I will next travel to South Africa. In the context of strengthening supply-chain resilience for critical materials which I have touched upon earlier, I believe it is particularly important to deepen cooperation with African countries rich in natural resources, such as rare earths and copper, which are essential to economic activity.

From the mining and refining of critical minerals to parts manufacturing and to the production of final products, Japan will pursue reliable cooperation throughout the entire process.

In this way, the strengthening of ties between Africa and Japan will not only contribute to further economic growth in Africa but will also directly support Japan's own growth.

Consequently, Japan's growth will generate new and larger-scale investment in Africa, which in turn will further accelerate Africa's growth.

I believe it is essential to boldly create such virtuous cycles of growth for both Japan and Africa

### **(3) Realizing a Society where Everyone Can Genuinely Feel Prosperity, through Empowering Young-Generation Co-Creation**

Finally, “Realizing a Society where Everyone Can Genuinely Feel Prosperity, through Empowering Young-Generation Co-Creation.”

The prosperity of a society cannot be measured solely by GDP or economic growth rates. Each person being able to live with peace of mind, develop their individual abilities, and play an active role in society—and the next generation feeling confident that their future will be brighter.

This, I believe, is true prosperity. Japan aims to create an environment in which young people—the key actors connecting the future of Japan and Africa—can join hands with hope in their hearts and work together to build a prosperous society.

Japan has already contributed to advances in health, medical research, and higher education across Africa through institutions such as the Kenya Medical Research Institute, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, and the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology. And underpinning this effort has been the deep commitment to Africa shared by university communities and researchers, including those from Nagasaki University, Kyoto University, and Okayama University.

In addition, the total number of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers dispatched to Africa has exceeded 16,000—making Africa the top destination for Japanese Volunteers worldwide. Through their work, they convey the value and significance of Japan and Africa working together to build a better society and a brighter future.

### **3. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)**

Having outlined the three pillars of Japan's Africa diplomacy, I would like to say a few words about TICAD, which serves as its principal platform.

Japan launched the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, known as TICAD, in 1993. At a time when the world could not yet foresee Africa's future after the Cold War, Japan perceived a glimmer of dawn on Africa's horizon.

Since then, TICAD has functioned as the central platform of Japan's Africa diplomacy, providing a forum for frank and constructive dialogue between Japanese and African leaders, grounded in the pillars of "peace and stability," "economy," and "society."

Moreover, the TICAD process has now become one of the key pillars supporting the broader FOIP vision.

TICAD has since been held alternately in Japan and Africa. TICAD 6 was held here in Kenya in 2016, and TICAD 8 in Tunisia in 2022.

Last August, TICAD 9 was held in Yokohama, with the participation of 49 African countries, including 33 leaders at the summit level. Lively discussions resulted in the adoption of the Yokohama Declaration.

Furthermore, reflecting the growing interest of Japanese companies in the expanding African market, 324 business-related cooperation documents were signed, and more than 200 thematic events were held by international organizations, private companies and civil society.

At the heart of ancient Egyptian civilization lay the movement of the sun. And the morning sun over Africa, which Japan first perceived 33 years ago, has now risen high in the sky. Today, Africa shines brightly as the next center of global growth and commands intense international attention.

To support Africa's development in a manner true to Africa itself, Japan will work to "co-create" the future together with Africa, under TICAD's fundamental principle of "African ownership and partnership with the international community."

The next TICAD 10 will be held in Africa, two years from now. In light of the rapidly changing international environment and Africa's progress, Japan intends to continue evolving TICAD itself, hand in hand with Africa, under this spirit of "co-creation."

#### **4. Conclusion**

Africa's growth is Japan's growth, and Japan's future is Africa's future. It is my heartfelt wish that Africa will become a continent of peace; that the great waves of growth and innovation created together by Japan and Africa will enrich this continent and the world; and that young people from Africa and Japan will move freely across these vast seas and skies, sharing the sparks born from their encounters and together opening the future of our world.

"Mtu ni watu"—"a person is people." Human beings can live and move forward only through connection with one another.

Indeed, it was the power of collective action that enabled our ancestors, Homo sapiens, originating here in Africa, to cross vast lands and seas and expand across the world.

Now, once again, from here in Kenya, let us together open a new page in history.

Asante sana.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.