

“Japan and South Africa: Developing a Free and Open Future Together”

I am MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. I will visit South Africa from 4 to 5 May. My previous visit to the country as Foreign Minister was 6 years ago. When I visited in 2020, I was deeply moved by South Africa's diversity, dynamism, and magnificent natural beauty. On this occasion, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the history of friendship that Japan and South Africa have built together, to further deepen those bonds, and, looking towards the future, to take a new step forward in partnership with South Africa.

With these thoughts in mind, I would like to highlight two points. First, the vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” which marks its 10th anniversary this year, and the future direction of Japan-Africa relations based on this vision. Second, the future of “co-creation” by Japan and Africa, as well as by Japan and South Africa, centred on the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which Japan and Africa have nurtured together.

Japan established an Honorary Consul in Cape Town in 1910, more than 100 years ago, and, over many years, has developed a friendly relationship with South Africa. Now, Japan and South Africa share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, and our two countries are building a record of cooperation while exchanging views candidly not only in bilateral relations but also on various global challenges. I believe that what has been nurtured for over a century is not merely a cooperative relationship, but one of trust in which we face common challenges and devote our efforts toward their resolution.

Now, this relationship of trust carries even greater significance than ever before. Today, the world is undergoing significant structural changes. The international order that we have developed and maintained over a long period is being exposed to unprecedented strains in various parts of the world. It is therefore more important for Japan and Africa to reinforce our ties to move forward hand in hand. For that, I believe the clear vision of FOIP is indispensable. This vision was first put forward by the former Prime Minister ABE Shinzo at TICAD VI in 2016, which was held in Africa for the first time. Former Prime Minister ABE stated, “Japan wants to work together with you in Africa in order to make the seas that connect the two

continents into peaceful seas that are governed by the rule of law. That is what we wish to do with you.” FOIP positions the two continents—Asia and Africa—and the two oceans—the Pacific and the Indian Ocean—as key to peace and prosperity in the international community of the future and embodies Japan's determination to build a free and open international order in these regions.

Ten years have passed since FOIP was announced, and we now face the realities of a new era marked by intensifying geopolitical competition, the growing importance of economic security, accelerated technological innovation, particularly in AI and digital technologies, and growing competition for technological leadership. While the importance of the core principles upheld by FOIP—freedom, openness, diversity, inclusiveness, and the rule of law—remains unchanged, it is essential for each country to become self-driven and resilient in areas such as economy, society, and security in order to realise FOIP under such challenging international circumstances. Japan stands ready to make every effort as a reliable and equal partner. Based on this approach, Japan will “evolve” FOIP and further strengthen its cooperation with Africa.

I believe that the aspiration for free, open, and stable oceans resonates deeply not only with Japan, but also with the people of South Africa. In 1995, the late President Nelson Mandela stated, “The natural urge of the facts of history and geography should broaden itself to include the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim.” Underlying this remark was the idea that the oceans do not separate countries but rather connect people with people and regions with regions, serving as a sphere that brings peace and prosperity. This spirit has been carried forward to the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and resonates with Japan's FOIP. The peace and stability of the oceans are indispensable for supporting global prosperity.

The deterioration of the situation in the Middle East has once again highlighted that sea lanes—not only the Strait of Hormuz, but also routes including South Africa's Cape of Good Hope—support the global economy and people's lives around the world, including through the stable supply of energy. In order to protect the maritime

order, Japan will continue to support the Indo-Pacific region, including through enhancing maritime law enforcement capabilities, promoting human resource development, and advancing capacity building such as countermeasures against piracy and terrorism, and thereby contributing to ensuring the stability of these seas.

As a core platform for sharing challenges with Africa and jointly creating solutions, TICAD has been playing a central role. Launched in 1993, TICAD has continued for more than 30 years based on the fundamental principles of African ownership and international partnership. President Cyril Ramaphosa participated in TICAD7 in 2019 and also in TICAD9 last year. This symbolises that Japan and South Africa have worked together over many years to shape the future through sustained dialogue and cooperation. Taking into account the rapidly changing international environment and the evolving realities of Africa, Japan will continue to “evolve” TICAD in line with the times and will move forward together with Africa to “co-create” solutions to challenges facing the continent and, by extension, the global community.

Africa is attracting international attention as the next centre of global growth, and interest from Japan's private sector is steadily rising. I am convinced that by bringing together Africa's growth with Japan's innovation, technology, and capital, a virtuous cycle of new value creation and sustainable growth—something that neither can achieve on its own—will emerge.

This conviction is supported by the track record of cooperation that Japan and South Africa have built over time. For example, ahead of the G20 Summit hosted by South Africa last November, the two countries concluded a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on decarbonisation. Based on this, initiatives are currently underway through public-private partnerships, including the development of a gas-fired power supply chain, the utilization of hydrogen and ammonia, and the establishment of legal frameworks for automobile recycling. Japan also intends to provide yen loans to support reforms in South Africa's energy sector. In addition, to promote the development of green infrastructure and contribute to sustainable economic growth, the Japanese government, together with Japanese

private companies, is extending co-financing, to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA).



MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Beyond these efforts, Japan has steadily advanced initiatives that contribute to South Africa's sustainable development and will continue to promote concrete cooperation in areas such as energy and critical minerals.

I am strongly convinced that, by building on the foundation of the relationship of trust that Japan and South Africa have cultivated over many years and by further deepening cooperation, we can provide a more stable and sustainable future for the Indo-Pacific, Africa, and the international community as a whole. I sincerely hope that this visit will mark a new step forward in that direction. I will make every possible effort to further enrich the ties between our two countries across a wide range of fields, including the economy and people-to-people exchanges.