



Letter No. 1/2019
10th April 2019

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have the honour to present my compliments and am delighted to deliver this year's first edition of *Japanese Ambassador's Newsletter* to you. I thank you for your responses via e-mail and letters after the publication of the last one in December last year.

As some of you might be aware, I was out of Nigeria for a while. Therefore, in this edition, I would like to start by explaining what I had been up to until I returned to Nigeria. This will be followed by an introduction of *New Era* in Japan and my thoughts on the new polity in Nigeria and the bilateral relationship between Japan and Nigeria. I hope you enjoy reading and I am more than happy to hear your feedbacks as always.

【Back in Nigeria】

After a long absence since January, I finally came back to Nigeria at the end of March. During my health check leave this time in Japan, it was detected that I had some, in doctors' terminology, "worrisome features" in my viscus. Because the doctors' recommendation to have a periodical check every six months seemed impractical to me as a diplomat, I decided to treat them on this occasion. Even though the recovery process took a bit longer than I had expected, I have come back to Nigeria in the pink. Now I am ready to continue doing my best for the strengthening of the friendly relations between Nigeria and Japan.

During the days in the hospital, I read, among others, two fascinating books. One was "AFRICA, RISE AND SHINE" written by Jim Ovia, the founder and chairperson of Zenith Bank. The other was "Nigeria: What Everyone Needs to Know" by John Campbell, a former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, and Matthew T. Page. Reading one book by a Nigerian and one book by Americans gave me an interesting impression. I felt "hope" for the future from Jim Ovia's, and "importance of democracy" from the latter. In any case, I fully share the view in the note on the back cover of the latter, which goes that Nigeria's success as a democracy is in the fundamental interest of the international community. In this context, I followed with great interest the process of the Presidential election 2019 from the hospital.

Now in Abuja, I am aware that both Nigeria and Japan are entering into a new phase respectively. In Japan, the name of a new era under a new Emperor has been announced. In Nigeria, President Buhari will commence his second term soon.

【New Era in Japan】

On the 1st April, the Government of Japan revealed the name of the upcoming Era "REIWA" (令和) to the world. For those who wonder what this *era* in Japan is about, let me explain briefly about Japanese tradition. In Japan, being a constitutional monarchy (not a republic), each Emperor's reign is given a name, or "genko", and then used alongside the Western calendar to mark the years. Historically speaking, each era name aims to set the tone for the upcoming decades, and remains significant to most Japanese. Japan will

enter into the new era REIWA as His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince will accede to the Throne on 1st May 2019 after the abdication of His Majesty the Emperor on 30th April, and the current gengo “HEISEI” (平成) adopted under the reign of the present Emperor will cease to be used on the day of abdication.

REIWA is officially translated as “Beautiful Harmony”. The name is taken from what is known as Manyoshu, the oldest existing anthology of Japanese poetry. The name REIWA includes the meaning that



culture will be nurtured as people bring their hearts together in a beautiful manner. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated that the new Era’s name represents the hope that every Japanese person will achieve their aspirations just like a plum flower flourishes after a severe winter with hope that the country’s history, tradition, culture and nature will be handed down for generations to come.

REIWA Era begins with a series of important international events and conferences which will be hosted in Japan towards the end of this year. The G20 Summit meeting in Osaka is approaching as it will take place on the 28th and 29th of June, which will be followed by TICAD7 (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) from 28th to 30th August at Yokohama, Japan. Furthermore, in October, there will be the Ceremony of Enthronement of the new Emperor scheduled on 22nd of October where the Heads of State from all over the world will be invited to attend to celebrate the new Emperor. It is also worth mentioning that we will host the Rugby World Cup 2019 in Japan from the end of September until the beginning of November. Therefore, the year 2019 is going to be critically important not only for Japan but also for the entire international community.

When it comes to the Japan-Nigeria bilateral relationship, it is no doubt that TICAD7 is of the most importance. TICAD, which started in 1993 by the initiative of the Government of Japan, is a platform to discuss the socio-economic development of Africa including Nigeria. I am delighted to inform you that one of the focuses of TICAD7 this year is an unprecedented level of involvement of the private sector. There will be a special session to discuss ways to promote more investments from Japanese private companies and others. The side event organized by JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) is also scheduled to take place to provide an opportunity for both the Japanese and African private sector to expand their business relationships. This trend of promotion of investments from Japanese companies in Africa explains why the concept of B-TICAD (B stands for Business) is one of the most important themes at TICAD7.

We would like to make best use of these opportunities of Nigeria’s highest level visits to Japan on such occasions to further strengthen Japan-Nigeria bilateral relationship.

【New polity in Nigeria and Japan-Nigeria relationship】

As I mentioned earlier in this letter, I was not able to be in Nigeria during the period of a series of important elections in Nigeria, but in Japan I was closely following the news coverage of the Nigerian election process. I was glad to note that some of the Japanese Embassy staff observed the election process in F.C.T. on 23rd February. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my congratulations to President Muhammadu Buhari for being re-elected for another term as President of Nigeria.

The Government of Japan is resolved to further enhance the bilateral relationship between the two countries with the new administration of Nigeria under the strong leadership of President Buhari. I am also ready to dedicate myself to playing my role as the Japanese Ambassador to deliver balanced images of Nigeria to the Japanese people and vice versa.



On top of a series of important events and conferences Japan will host this year, the next year 2020, setting Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics aside, will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship between Japan and Nigeria. Therefore, with a view of further strengthening Japan-Nigeria bilateral relationship, I think it is vitally significant to bring all the stakeholders together as team “All Japan”, whether from public or private sector, so that we can move forward with the Nigerian side toward the historic and epoch-making year of 2020.

【In Closing】

To conclude this edition of Japanese Ambassador’s Newsletter, just as I explained, a lot of important diplomatic agendas are waiting ahead of us, so it would be highly appreciated if I may count on your continuous support and understanding for the Embassy’s activities.

Yours sincerely,

Yutaka KIKUTA

Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of Japan
to the Federal Republic of Nigeria

*For further information on the Embassy of Japan’s activities in Nigeria, please visit our Website and Facebook page.

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