



Dear Sir or Madam,

I have the honour to present my compliments and am delighted to deliver the latest edition of Japanese Ambassador's Newsletter to you. This newsletter is also my last edition. Once again, I would like to thank you for your responses to my newsletters issued up until now.

**【Japan-Nigeria: Diamond Jubilee and Beyond】**

As I mentioned in the previous edition, last October marked the 60th independence anniversary of Nigeria as well as the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Nigeria. Furthermore, 26 December last year also marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Japanese Embassy in Nigeria. Since the establishment of the Embassy of Japan in Nigeria in 1960, the Embassy has been solely in charge of Nigeria.

It was a great pleasure and honour for me to commemorate such a momentous year as Ambassador of Japan to Nigeria. I look forward to further deepening our bilateral relations towards the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary and beyond.



**【New WTO leader】**

On 15 February, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was selected as the first woman and the first African Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Nigeria on the selection, which was long-awaited and widely-supported by member countries.



Please allow me to take this opportunity to share with you some connections between Japan and Dr. Okonjo-Iweala. Firstly, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala has been a member of the International Advisory Board of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) since 2017. JICA is one of the bodies which implement Japan's ODA. Japan appreciates her insightful and valuable advice and suggestions on how to improve Japan's ODA to the world, including Nigeria.

Secondly, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala visited Japan on the occasion of TICAD7 in 2019 to attend a meeting as the Board Chair of Gavi Vaccine Alliance. She participated in the meeting, hosted by the Japanese Government, in order to support Gavi's activities, which contributed to the successful achievement of the Global Vaccine Summit on 4 June last year. At the Summit, Gavi timely launched COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) and on 8 October last year, Japan pledged US\$130 million in funding to this instrument in order to enable developing countries, including Nigeria, to have equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition, on 9 February, the Government of Japan announced that Japan will increase its contribution to the COVAX AMC up to US\$200 million in total.

Thirdly and the most importantly, Japan and Nigeria have common ground on WTO reform. Japan believes that reform of WTO should commence immediately. Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and H.E. Geoffrey Onyeama, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, agreed to bolster cooperation for WTO reform during their telephone conversation in January this year. In this regard, it is encouraging that Dr. Okonjo-Iweala stated that she is eager to focus on the many needed reforms of WTO. Japan strongly supports Dr. Okonjo-Iweala and rests assured that she will work on accumulated issues and steadily advance the WTO reform.

**【Ceremony celebrating the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan】**

This year marks the third year of REIWA, which began when the current Emperor of Japan ascended the throne in 2019. His Majesty the Emperor of Japan was born in 1960, and turned 61 on 23 February. It means the Japanese Emperor is the same calendar age with Nigeria. I sincerely hope for peace, harmony, and further prosperity of both Japan and Nigeria.

On 15 February, the same day Dr. Okonjo-Iweala was selected as DG of WTO, our Embassy held a ceremony celebrating the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. On the occasion our Embassy conducted the award ceremony of the Japanese Foreign Minister’s Commendation. I was greatly honored to convey the Commendations on Professor Ogbonna and Professor Dauda, both of whom became the first Nigerians to receive the Commendations. The awards acknowledge their enormous contributions to improving and deepening the Japan-Nigeria relationship. I believe the Commendations bring great hope for future generations and the expansion of people-to-people exchanges and cultural exchanges between the two countries.



An example of hope for future generation already emerged. At the end of last year, the Embassy of Japan organised the first-ever Japanese speech contest in Nigeria. At the event on 15, February, we also presented the awards to the winners of the contest. I was impressed and delighted to find so many bright youngsters learning Japanese in Nigeria and I truly enjoyed listening to their eager speeches. We hope that the Japanese speech contest, initiated by our Embassy, will continue to facilitate the expansion of the circle of Japanese language learners.



## **【Farewell message】**

Lastly, please let me take this opportunity to announce my farewell. After two years and nine months of my tenure, I will soon be leaving this country.

Looking back on my tenure, there have been many achievements from high level to grassroots level in terms of deepening relations between Japan and Nigeria. I cannot list them all here, but significant progress has been made in each field including politics, economics, economic cooperation, education and culture. Especially in 2019, there was a boost in exchange visits of dignitaries between Japan and Nigeria, including the visit to Tokyo by H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari to attend the TICAD7 meeting, making the first Nigerian Presidential visit to Japan in 11 years. Japan and Nigeria have been strengthening not only bilateral relations, but also cooperation at the multilateral sphere. Japan is looking forward to continuing to work closely with Nigeria in the international fora, including on WTO and UN reforms.

Since I arrived in this country in May 2018, I have been continuously impressed by Nigeria's rich culture and have been enjoying working in this fascinating country. I highly regard the efforts made by the Federal and State Governments in building this resilient country based on democracy in diversity.

We are still experiencing some restrictions and challenges due to COVID-19, but I wish you all good health, prosperity and a further deepening of friendly relations between Japan and Nigeria. I will leave for my next assignment with hope for the future, looking forward to meeting the friends I made in Nigeria somewhere else in the world.

Finally, yet importantly, I would like to thank you once again for your understanding and cooperation for the Embassy's activities during my tenure, and I would like to ask that you extend the same support to my successor.

Yours sincerely,

KIKUTA Yutaka  
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.

Website: [https://www.ng.emb-japan.go.jp/itprtop\\_ja/index.html](https://www.ng.emb-japan.go.jp/itprtop_ja/index.html)

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