

Kenya-Japan relations set for a new high

By **Moi Lemoshira**
Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya



Moi Lemoshira

I assumed my appointment in Tokyo in August 2024. I am honored to represent Kenya in Japan, a leading development partner with growing ties across various sectors.

On Dec. 12, Kenya celebrates its 61st anniversary, commonly known as Jamhuri Day. This

is an opportunity for Kenyans to honor past generations for delivering freedom, democracy, development and shared prosperity. With equal pride, Kenyans also recognize and celebrate partners around the world who continue to inspire and support on development agenda. Japan recognized Kenya immediately after the declaration of independence in Nairobi on Dec. 12, 1963, and established formal diplomatic relations. The two countries have therefore had six decades of diplomatic relations with remarkable milestones that have attested to the intensity of partnership, both at the bilateral and international levels.

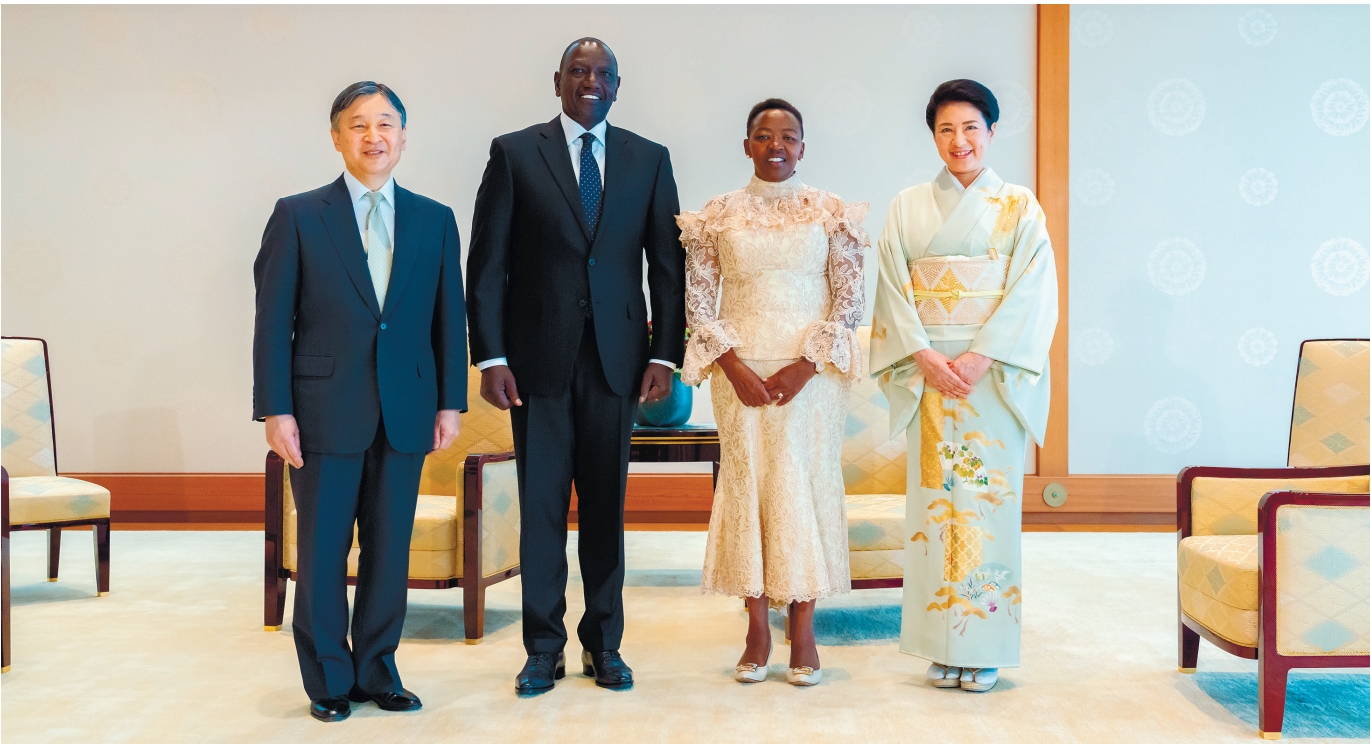
Over the years, Kenya-Japan relations have been informed by shared values for sustainable development and commitment to shared prosperity. The two countries are formidable proponents of democracy, rule of law and the imperative for sustained global peace and security. Japan has consistently stood by Kenya supporting development cooperation which amounts to a total of \$5.5 billion, which is the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya appreciates Japanese support to the national priorities such as health, agriculture, food security and energy, among others, as envisaged in the Kenya's Bottom-Up Transformation Agenda (BETA) for inclusive growth. By delivering major development projects and transfer of technology, many Japanese private-sector entities have become household names in Kenya.

The strong political and diplomatic relations between Kenya and Japan coupled with recorded successes by many Japanese companies, underline the significant and positive trajectory for the future. The intensity of exchange of high-level visits continue to boost Kenya-Japan relations with formidable progress realized in strengthening political and diplomatic relations. The visit to Kenya by H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida, former Prime Minister of Japan, in May 2023 and the reciprocal visit to Tokyo by H.E. Dr. William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya in February this year, have given impetus to our relations. The experiences of over 103 Japanese companies established in Kenya validate the business-friendly environment.

Why Kenya?

As a flourishing democratic system, Kenya is in tandem with Japan's democratic value system of good governance. Kenya has a stable economy with a business-friendly legal framework and extensive incentives for foreign direct investments. The government supports the private-sector partnerships as the engine of economic growth through investments. Kenya has realized tremendous successes in delivering transformational projects through partnerships with Japanese companies such as in the Olkaria Geothermal power production. Japanese investments in geothermal significantly contribute to Kenya's remarkable achievement of 95% renewable energy status. Japanese companies are also leading in the development of Mombasa Port with completion of the construction of key road networks including the new Dongo Kundu Bypass, a crucial link within the East Africa coastline.

Kenya's geostrategic location at the Indian Ocean and the continued growth of Mombasa as a regional and international economic hub continues to attract



Courtesy of the Imperial Household Agency

H. E. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya, and his spouse, Mrs. Rachel Chebet Ruto, make a state call on Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress at the Imperial Palace in February 2024 during an official visit to Japan.

businesses seeking opportunities in the larger East Africa region. The expansion of the East African Community (EAC) to include the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Somalia has further elevated the position of one of the fastest growing regional blocs in Africa. The successful transformation of Mombasa Port as a regional logistic center for international businesses in East and Central Africa and leading global organizations such as the United Nations confirms Kenya's claim as a global business hub. The involvement of Japanese companies in the development of Mombasa Port is a hallmark of Kenya and Japan relations.

A tech savvy youthful population is driving Kenya's digital space opening new avenues for foreign investments in start-ups. Many young graduates are part of the youth dividends that defines Kenya's attractive labor market, which Japanese companies can harness to provide technology solutions for businesses in Africa and beyond. For example, through conglomerate investments and other strategic partners, Kenya's telecommunication giant Safaricom has entered the Ethiopian market to realize one of Africa's largest ventures. The success story of startups such Novastar and BASIGO that draw considerable Japanese investments are new additions to Kenya's attractive business envi-

ronment.

Furthermore, as one of the largest economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya has unique opportunities to offer from championing the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA). Since the ACFTA came into effect in April 2019, Kenya has been at the forefront in promoting the many opportunities for Japanese to expand business interests in Africa. Africa is the next frontier for global growth and Kenya, being the established continental commercial hub with ease of air and sea freight connectivity, is the entry point for international trade and investments. Kenya also exhibits the successes of Japan's cooperation with continental bodies such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) in the implementation of transnational development projects.

Intensifying trade and investments

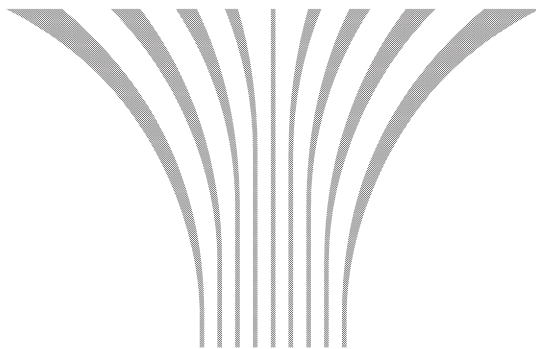
There is more potential in Japan's trade relations beyond the current estimated \$1 billion. Kenya recognizes the need to seek an extended business partnership through which Japan will increase its investment profile and transfer of technology. To fast-track action to spur the Kenya-Japan partnership, the Embassy will strengthen its Trade Section to an integrated Commercial Hub to undertake promotional activities and facilitate regular engagement between Kenyan and Japanese companies. A high-powered joint trade and investment delegation from Japan will visit Kenya in mid-January 2025 to participate in a business forum as part of the commitment to build trade and economic portfolios. Kenya will also seize the forthcoming Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai for familiarization of ready investable projects, showcase its magical tourism products through Virtual Safari and facilitate business meetings between prospective partners. The ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) to be held in Yokohama in August 2025 is also a great opportunity for growing business partnerships. Kenya welcomes the Japanese business community to explore the unlimited opportunities as we elevate Kenya-Japan relations to a new high.

For inquiry: kenrep@kenyarep-jp.com

CONGRATULATIONS

to the People of the Republic of Kenya
on the Anniversary of their Independence

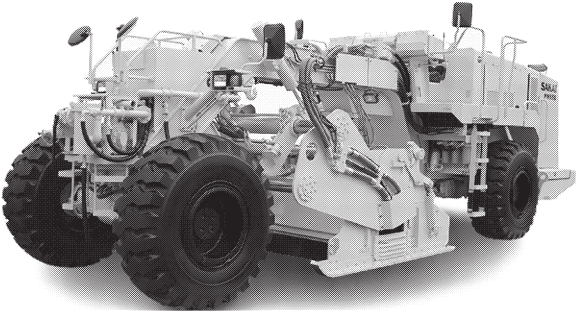
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KONOIKE CONSTRUCTION CO.,LTD.
International Division
1-9-1, Nihonbashi-honcho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103-0023 Japan
Tel: +81-3-5201-7730 Fax: +81-3-5201-7735

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