

Title: A Vision for the Future of Japan-Sudan Relations

July 31st, 2021 marks my first anniversary since I have assumed the role of the Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of the Sudan. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of Sudan, as well as our international partners, for welcoming me and cooperating with Japan.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the world, this past year has been extremely distressing, devastating countless lives across the globe. In spite of this backdrop, I have witnessed the resilient spirit and the unwavering will of the Sudanese nation toward achieving peace and stability, democratic transition, and economic recovery, all of which are fundamental to improve the lives of the Sudanese people.

In this respect, the Government of Japan has played a humble yet meaningful role in supporting Sudan. Allow me to pick up right where I had left off - in my previous article, I had vowed that Japan would serve as a reliable development and humanitarian supporter and as an economic partner of Sudan. In this piece, I would like to share how Japan has upheld its promises so far.

As a development and humanitarian supporter, Japan has contributed to Sudan through international and bilateral avenues.

At the international level, on June 2nd, Japan co-hosted the COVAX AMC Summit in partnership with Gavi. The purpose of this Summit was to raise additional funding to secure necessary vaccines for developing countries by the end of 2021 through the COVAX Facility scheme. COVAX Facility aims to ensure equitable access to safe, effective, and quality-assured vaccines under the premise that we will leave no one's health behind, based on the concept of Human Security, in order to attain the ultimate goal of overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sudan is one of the 92 recipients of the COVAX Facility program, and in fact received its first Oxford-AstraZeneca doses in early March. Japan plans to contribute an additional 800 million USD and approximately 30 million doses of vaccines manufactured in Japan to the recipients at the appropriate time when circumstances allow. Japan will continue providing assistance to tackle the pandemic through this international framework, based on the principle of equity.

Narrowing down the focus specifically on Sudan, Japan has provided development and humanitarian support to Sudan in various fields through both international and bilateral channels. Starting with the field of public health and hygiene, for instance, Japan has contributed almost 1 million USD to provide critical health services to conflict-affected children and women in the context of COVID-19 through UNICEF, and also contributed approximately 2 million USD to build community resilience through improved access to water through ILO. In addition, Japan has bilaterally offered ambulances and vaccine delivery vehicles, as well as providing support for water treatment and waste management. These projects reflect our emphasis on universal health coverage and Human Security. Furthermore, Japan has also provided assistance to Sudan in other fields as well. Recent projects include providing a 2.72 million USD grant for food assistance and constructing a vocational training center for Mycetoma patients.

At the same time, the economic progress of Sudan is an equally crucial pillar in building the future of Sudan. In this regard, I am positive that Japan could play an effective and constructive role as a business and investment partner of Sudan.

Prior to my Ambassadorship, I have devoted the entirety of my career to bridging Japanese and African businesses in my capacity in the private sector. Thus, it is an honor for me to spearhead the efforts to promote stronger and closer ties between the Japanese and Sudanese business communities and economies on behalf of Japan.

One outcome that I would like to achieve in the economic realm is to establish a multifaceted bilateral relationship by encouraging collaboration and cooperation among and between the government-industry-academia nexus of the two countries. As a starting point, I believe fostering communication between the Japanese and Sudanese business communities is of paramount importance. Given that both Japanese and Sudanese businesses are not haunted by the near-sighted rent-seeking attitude, but are instead adept at long-term thinking, I believe there would be great chemistry between the two business communities to forge a strong partnership.

In order to accomplish this goal, I have created a roadmap, which comprises four steps. The first step is to welcome a Sudanese business delegation to Japan. This visit will serve as an opportunity not only for the businesses of both countries to interact with each other and build relationships in-person, but also to resume politically high-level political

exchanges between the two countries.

The second step is to receive the first Japanese public-private joint business delegation to Sudan since 2011. This would be the perfect opportunity for Japanese firms to observe the economic potential Sudan possesses with their own eyes.

The third step is to hold a Japan-Sudan Investment Conference in Tokyo. This would provide an opportunity for Sudanese businesses to expose themselves to and reach a wider audience in promoting and displaying the country's vast economic potential.

Finally, the fourth step is to conclude several Memorandum of Understandings on partnerships between Sudanese and Japanese firms on the margins of the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8), planned to be held next year in Tunisia. This opportunity would allow Japan and Sudan to display their close economic ties and shed light on the business and investment opportunities in Sudan.

These steps do not just look good on paper; in fact, I have already begun translating words into action. In May, I have launched the Japan-Sudan Business Cooperation Committee in collaboration with the Sudanese government. The purpose of this Committee is twofold; it will not only serve as a platform for sharing information and addressing issues to improve the business environment in Sudan, but also as a platform to bring together and match firms from Japan and Sudan for future joint business opportunities. Still being in its early stages, I look forward to further developing this platform as the anchor of Japan and Sudan's business ties.

The hardship inflicted upon humanity in the past year has accentuated the importance of international cooperation. Japan will continue to stand alongside the Sudanese people as a supporter and partner to overcome these challenges. To conclude, I believe that this past year has been a fruitful one for Japan-Sudan relations, and I will spare no effort to elevate the bilateral relationship to reach even greater heights in the coming years.