

New Years Reflection

I wish you a happy new year 2014.

Nine months have passed since I assumed my duties as Japanese Ambassador to Rwanda in last March, and I think I got accustomed to life and climate in Rwanda.

2014 will be a landmark year for Rwanda, which commemorates the 1994 Genocide for the 20th time. Besides annual ceremony at Amahoro Stadium, several events are scheduled to be held around the country and abroad around the Memorial Day of Genocide on 7th April.

I think we, Japanese, should make this an opportunity for us to think about what Genocide in this country was, and how we can cooperate with the people of Rwanda who experienced such a tragedy.

Last year, President Kagame attended the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) which was held at Yokohama in June, and played a leading role in several sessions. At TICAD V, the importance of private investments to African countries was emphasized more than economic cooperation. I am also racking my brains about how private investments from Japan can be realized here.

Rwanda has achieved high economic growth, which is called a “Miracle in Africa” in recent years. Rwanda fully recognizes its handicap as a landlocked country, and trusts its future through the fields of ICT, Finance and Aviation.

I have worked here only for less than one year by now, but from my daily life, I can point to two systems as driving forces for the development of the country.

One of them is “Umuganda” (public community service). In the morning of the last Saturday of each month, all citizens do public volunteer services such as road repairing, tree planting, and cleaning. By fostering a sense of solidarity and working harmoniously in each village, Rwanda has rebuilt its nation from the devastation. This practice is not newly introduced by the current government, but takes root in Rwandan society traditionally, I heard.

Another one is “Imihigo” (contract of performance goal). This is the system that the president asks ministers, mayors and ambassadors to show their performance goals, and checks one year later whether those goals are achieved or not. People with excellent results are

commended and I heard that people with poor performances would be replaced. This system that encourages each player to compete seems functioning effectively for the development of this country.

Rwanda aims to become a middle-income country within six years by 2020. It might not be impossible for Rwandans since they are serious and diligent. Japan contributes positively to nation building of Rwanda.

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