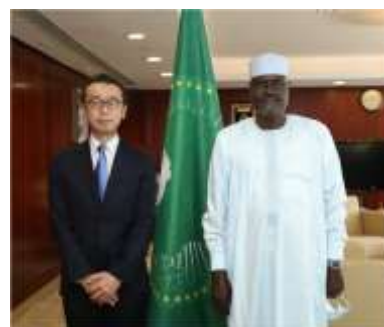


Happy New Year!

Japan's 2021 diplomatic activities start with a visit to Africa by H.E. Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs. He previously visited Africa in December of 2020. His subsequent visits will show how serious Japan is to promote its relationships with African nations.



*Please refer to the following Japan's MOFA website for further information on Foreign Minister MOTEGI's visits to Africa:

[Foreign Minister MOTEGI Visits Tunisia, Mozambique, South Africa and Mauritius \(December 8-14, 2020\)](#)

[Foreign Minister MOTEGI Visits Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa \(January 4-14, 2021\)](#)

At the outset of the calendar year 2021, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce some major activities related to the African Union (AU) this year.

1. African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

On 1 January, trade commenced under the AfCFTA. This is the beginning of an iconic free trade area that symbolizes Africa's integrity as well as openness, while at the same time we have witnessed some protectionist views throughout the world. This free trade area will enable us to ensure a regional value chain, and I feel that Japanese businesses are showing a great deal of interest in it.

2. AU Annual Theme for 2021: The Year of "The Arts, Culture and Heritage"

The AU's annual theme and policy priority for 2021, "The Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want", is a back-casting looking perspective of Africa's ideal self-portrait that sheds light on the existing African legacy. Those perspectives will be a very good reference for us as well.

3. New AU Leadership

This year, Africa will elect new leaders of the African Union Commission (AUC), the Executive Branch of the AU and the core of the Union. A new leadership is supposed to be formulated after the election, which is scheduled to take place in February. We will learn how the new AUC leaders tackle issues, and we will introduce Japan's strong and

appealing perspectives in order to promote our relationship through our joint works.

Next year in Tunisia, we will organize TICAD8, the 8th edition of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, to be participated in by heads of states or the highest level of governments of Africa and Japan. Its main theme certainly must include how to rebuild healthcare systems impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to build a whole socio-economic structure back better than it was during the pre-COVID period.

This is why we sincerely hope to learn from Africa, and to listen to as many people as possible, in order to formulate our future policy. I am looking forward to hearing from you. I will appreciate if you would reach out to our Mission through our email address: japan-au.mission@ua.mofa.go.jp



HORIUCHI, Toshihiko
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan
to the African Union

January 2021

*"AMABIE"- Japanese legendary
traditional talisman doll
against epidemics*