

*Ambassador of Japan to the African Union
Addis Ababa*

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Warm greetings to Your Excellencies and dear friends,

Looking back at the year 2021, it has been another year of continuing to fight against, and learning to live with, COVID-19 and its negative consequences for the whole world, especially for Africa. However, at the same time, it was a year when Africa made a huge step towards integration, symbolized by the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Going through 12 months of struggle, I have come to realize that it is extremely important that Africa reassures its resilience in every sector, including in the socio-economic and peace and security sectors, in collaboration with the international community and partners. Japan spares no effort in supporting Africa's quick recovery and to help build back better in the post-COVID 19 world.

As you may recall, Japan hosted the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and many African athletes and support staff participated in the historic games. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude on behalf of the Government and people of Japan for their participation amid the Covid-19 pandemic and to express my upmost respect for each one of their glorious accomplishments. This shows, without a doubt, the resilience of both Japan and Africa, and surely strengthened the ties between Japan and the continent.

This year, Japan and the African Union Commission (AUC) will co-organize the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) in Tunisia, together with the other co-organizers: the UN, UNDP and World Bank. TICAD8 will provide a platform not only for Africa, but for all stakeholders around the world and in multi-dimensional sectors to discuss African development, business opportunities, and for sharing experiences on various issues and challenges that Africa and the world are facing.



(@ Pre-Tana Forum co-organized by IPSS of Addis Ababa University (AAU) and Mission of Japan to the AU in Sep. 2021)

Now is the time that the world needs African wisdom and dynamism.

Last but not least, I would like to invite all of you to get together to open a new chapter of Japan-Africa cooperation in 2022.

I wish you all good health and prosperity.

Best regards,

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