

## **Address at the working visit by Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori of Japan**

Gallagher Estate, 9 January 2001

Your Excellency Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori  
Honourable Madame Sadako Ogata, former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,  
Distinguished Members of the Japanese delegation  
Deputy President Jacob Zuma  
Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministers and Deputy Ministers  
Premier Shilowa and Mrs Luhabe  
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners  
Distinguished Guests

This is, for us, an historic occasion.

We are very pleased that so early in the new millennium we have had the privilege to welcome to our soil, for the first time in our joint histories, a serving Prime Minister of Japan.

My only regret, Prime Minister, is that I will not be able to take you to a rugby match. This means you will have to return for that particular purpose.

I must also take this opportunity once more to thank you most sincerely for the friendly, gracious and serious manner in which you received the Presidents of Algeria, Nigeria and ourselves when we visited Tokyo last year on the eve of the Okinawa Summit of the G8.

It is also most appropriate and significant that you visit Africa as the people of this continent strive to make this a century of African revival to enable this continent, to take its rightful place amongst the community of nations.

The vision of African renewal, of an African renaissance embodies the common aspiration of the peoples of our continent to achieve democracy, peace and prosperity.

Your mere presence in our midst, Prime Minister, inspires in us the confidence that, whatever the difficulties, we will succeed.

I say this because of the history of your own country, Japan. Starting with the Meiji Restoration (in 1868) and then again from the ashes of devastation caused by the Second World War, Japan has become a highly developed country, sitting justly and proudly among the leading countries of our common world.

Above all else, this is testimony to the character, resolve, ingenuity and hard work of the people of Japan, characteristics we will have to emulate ourselves as we strive to achieve the objectives of the African Century.

The South African Government and people welcome the decision of the Government of Japan to come even more directly involved in the affairs of our continent, and the commitment to make this part of the centrepiece of Japan foreign policy.

Your support and involvement in the struggles of the peoples of Africa for a better life for themselves is itself, Prime Minister, part of the guarantee that we will succeed.

It is clear to us that Japan's support for conflict prevention in Africa, assistance in combating diseases such as Malaria, TB and AIDS, initiatives to bridge the information technology gap, support for refugees

and for the economic reconstruction of our continent, are all critical to Africa's development. The synchronisation of the work we are currently involved in, to help elaborate an ambitious but realistic African development programme, with the plan of action emanating out of the TICAD process (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) is crucial in this regard.

We are committed to the achievement of this objective.

We are very pleased to note, Prime Minister, that during the last decade our bilateral relations have grown from strength to strength. I can say this without fear of contradiction that today we maintain relations between ourselves characterised by a spirit of friendship, an absence of tensions of any kind, mutually advantageous co-operation and solidarity.

It is in this spirit that I am certain we will continue to work together further to intensify our relations in all fields, including politics, the economy, science and technology, tourism and so on.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Government and people of Japan for the generous development assistance that has been extended to us since our liberation.

We have been greatly strengthened by your efforts to assist us also in the area of human resource development both in South Africa and by enabling many South Africans to attend courses in Japan.

The signing of the Japan Overseas Co-operation Volunteers Agreement today is an additional manifestation of the seriousness with which Japan views human resource development.

It is also clear, Prime Minister, that while our bilateral relations remain excellent, South Africa and Japan can do more together in areas we share common interests, including the reform of the United Nations system, in matters of disarmament, poverty eradication globally, conservation and the protection of the environment and human security.

This will help further to advance our common objective of contributing to the creation of a better world.

Before I close, I would like to thank H.E. Ambassador Atsushi Hatakenaka for the excellent work he has done further to strengthen the relations between our two countries and peoples. I wish him well in all his future endeavours. I was also very pleased Prime Minister to see that you have Madame Sadako Ogata in your delegation. I have been privileged to meet her a number of times while she was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

I was always struck by her compassion, her strength of feeling, her loyalty to principle, her impatience with dishonest leaders and governments and her determination. She has been of enormous help to the peoples of our continent, especially those forced in to the most desperate life circumstances, the refugees born of the unacceptable violent conflicts on our continent.

I have been honoured to count her as a friend and take this opportunity to wish her the best for the future.

Your Excellency, I wish to thank you personally for visiting our country and reiterate our sincere appreciation of your Government's serious commitment to Africa's rebirth.

Thank you.