

SA-Japan partnership forum kicks off in Tokyo

The 9th South Africa-Japan partnership forum, which aims to advance North-South relations between the two countries, has kicked off in Tokyo, Japan.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, South African Deputy Minister Fatima Hajaig together with her Japanese counterpart Deputy Minister Seiko Hashimoto co-chaired the opening plenary of the two-day forum on Monday.

Issues on the table

Issues on the agenda for discussions between Deputy Ministers Hajaig and Hashimoto will include the status of bilateral political, economic and trade relations between the two countries and domestic developments in Japan and South Africa.

“It will also focus on recent developments within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU).

“Other areas of interest include discussions on the Middle East and Japan's priorities and objectives for its tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council,” the department said.

While in Japan, Deputy Minister Hajaig will also pay a courtesy visit to Foreign Minister Nakasone and Ambassador Oshima, Senior Vice President of the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

The deputy minister is expected to return to South Africa on Friday.

Development

Japan's economic policy toward African development is directed within the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process which was first held in 1993.

TICAD has led to the implementation of projects aimed at increasing African human resource capacity, infrastructure development and investment.

Japan has long advocated the importance of ownership of the development process by Africa in partnership with the developed world.

At the TICAD IV convened by the Japanese Government in Yokohama in May 2008, the participants compiled the Yokohama Action Plan that lays out assistance measures to be implemented by countries or organisations in support of

African development.

The action plan provides for assistance to African Governments under boosting economic growth, trade, investment and tourism, agriculture, infrastructure, community development, education, health and others.

Both countries have expressed a desire to see an increase in trilateral co-operation with third countries in the rest of Africa in an effort to extend and promote economic growth on the continent.

Top export partner

Japan is an important trading partner for South Africa, in 2005 Japan became and still remains South Africa's number one export partner, followed by the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany.

It is South Africa's fourth largest import partner after Germany, China, and the US.

South Africa imports technology-intensive goods from Japan and exports base metals.

In recent years, this has changed to more value-added goods such as motor vehicles.

Since 1994, there have been over 42 major investments in South Africa by Japanese companies, amounting to more than \$1 billion.

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