

Message from Japan

—Kenya: Towards the 1st Miracle Country in Africa—

People in the world are getting nervous whether Kenya's presidential election in March 2013 can change her history, because the violence after 2007 presidential election was just another happening: one of the African diseases, quick "resort to violence" which caused tremendous economic loss in addition to the loss of more than 1000 Kenyans.

I say "resort", because violence is psychologically the easiest way of doing, so far as they do not think of Kenya's future and economy. The economic loss for the entire Kenya can amount to at least US\$20 billion in total in several years future time if another big violence takes place taking into consideration the economic size of Kenya: US\$40 billion¹.

In stark contrast to Kenya's experience is Ghana. They had a peaceful presidential election twice, which transferred power to a new African leader in a decade firstly to Kufuor in 2002 and then Atta Mills in 2009, and was highly celebrated across the African continent and the other part of the world. Ghana went into HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Country) in 2002, but its GDP/capita is about twice that of Kenya, because keeping peace leads to building up assets in terms of credibility and wealth based on what the people have built in the past.

The election in Ghana in 2002 was encouraging to me, since I provided a seminar on macro-economy in the parliament for over 20 Ministers/Vice-Ministers in 2001 before president Rawlings stepped down. In my seminar, my topics were as follows;

1. Many African countries used to have higher GDP/capita than some countries in Asia such as Singapore and Korea 40-50 years ago. Ghana used to provide financial assistance to Korea in 1960s, but none of the African countries was able to catch up with Asian countries in the past.
2. The biggest problem is that none of the African leaders ever had a clear vision to catch up with the advanced countries in Europe, whereas some of the Asian leaders had a clear vision to take over Europe and USA.²
3. Another problem is that the people in Africa have not noticed that they themselves were hurting their friends in their countries due to inadequate macro-economic view. For example, although Ghana is one of the biggest manufacturers of chocolate, half of chocolate products sold at stores in Ghana were imports from Europe in 2000-2001. This means they were importing European labor although so many in Ghana were unemployed. Discouraging for the Japanese experts was the fact no one had ever tried to attack European products with their

¹ The calculation can be made in terms of the anticipated stagnant economic activities, such as loss of tourism, loss of trading, loss of investments which can compound and multiply negatively for several years due to lost credibility in Kenya's economy. If you calculate the difference between the best scenario of created credibility due to peaceful election, and the worst for the future several years for Kenya's economy, US\$20 billion is considered quite realistic.

² Some in Africa argue that African leaders were not able to establish a clear vision because they had long colonization, coup d'etat, and ethnicity problems. But we can say the same to Asian countries. I say rather because of lack of a clear vision, they went into problems.

own superior resources. “No will” means “no winning”. Unless you challenge, you will never make it.³

4. My final message is “People should love themselves⁴, and based on the love, they should take actions.”

In the modern global economy, even the domestic market is global in terms of competition. Unless the people in Kenya establish a clear will to survive, they will be defeated. If the government goes to protectionism, the domestic industries will be weaker and weaker. But if the government provides them with appropriate training on management and technologies together with financial assistance to equip them with good machines, they will learn how to compete and solve their problems to survive.

All leaders in Africa should seriously consider why African economies have not been so successful as some Asians. And our answer is lack of political will to lead the people to better economic conditions.

As a French philosopher: Alain⁵ said, willpower plays a central role in creating happiness. It is not through accident that we are happy or unhappy. Happiness must be cultivated through individual efforts. Because the physical and mental faculties cannot be separated, the wise and happy person should strive for a healthy mind and body, which will serve for both reflective thought and judicious action. Happiness is equated with virtue, liberty, and justice.

Hoping that the coming presidential election will be a peaceful one.

Attachments: When we smile, and Message by the Project Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Watanabe', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Joji WATANABE

³ This phrase is one of key points in “Song of Kaizen”(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HeYwkjZY4s>)

⁴ Loving ourselves is not easy. We all feel and assume we love ourselves. But our actions often do not support this. Simple examples are habit of smoking, alcoholics, and even lack of communication within family. We need to overcome our ego to take enlightened actions, and this is basic of learning.

⁵ Alain (Chartier, Émile Auguste), 1868-1951, French essayist and philosopher.

“When we smile...”

1. When we smile, we can be happier.
When we smile, we can make friends with good ones.
When we smile, we can form a great community.
When we smile, we can aim a little higher.

It is our will that makes our country a great place for us all.

2. When we are humble, we can listen to others.
When we are humble, we can learn things quickly.
When we are humble, we can collaborate as a team.
When we are humble, we can achieve more.

It is our will that makes our country a great place for us all.

3. When things are getting tougher, and you feel like giving up.
and when you think you cannot carry on.

Try again together,
because it is our will that makes our country a great place for us all.

Why did I write this verse “When we smile...” ?

There are countries whose GDP/capita can go up quickly within 30 years or so, such as Japan after World War II in 1945, followed by Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, where all the latter four called Asian dragons. We can also find Ireland as a good example in Europe, which used to be the poorest nation in the Western Europe, but achieved the average growth of GDP/capita 9.1% in their 1990s.

Singapore and Ireland used to be colonies of UK just as many in Africa, but both of them have higher GDP/capita than UK now.

When I was consulting to develop a higher education strategy in Ghana during 1999-2001, I was surprised to hear many educated people talking about the reasons for the slow economic growth, being colonization, exploitation of natural resources by the advanced countries. In Kenya, highly educated people argue that the reason why the environment of the local industries is so bad, full of litters, wastes and dangers due to rough road surface is inadequate service by the city government.

I say they all, although highly educated, do not have right mindset to make their own country a great country, because they find causes for any problems, outside themselves, over which they do not have any control. In other words, they always avoid becoming problem-owners. However, unless people become problem-owners, they cannot solve the problems by themselves.

Japan is well known for its clean environment. Most people in Japan do not dump wastes in public, because we ourselves often clean the environment. Are we paid if we clean the environment? No. It is our periodical service free of charge to please walkers in front of workshops, houses and its surroundings, and make our environment comfortable. We clean the walkways, children’s playgrounds, etc. periodically free of charge, maybe for our own good physical exercise.

In this verse “When we smile...”, I wanted to emphasize the same idea of a French philosopher: Alain⁶, who said “Because we smile, we can be happy. It is not that we are happy, we smile.” based on his conviction that willpower of individuals plays a central role, also I believe, in determining the future of any nations

⁶ Alain (Chartier, Émile Auguste), 1868-1951, French essayist and philosopher. According to Alain, willpower plays a central role in creating happiness. It is not through accident that we are happy or unhappy. Happiness must be cultivated through individual efforts. Because the physical and mental faculties cannot be separated, the wise and happy person should strive for a healthy mind and body, which will serve for both reflective thought and judicious action. Happiness is equated with virtue, liberty, and justice. (Edited from <http://danassays.wordpress.com/encyclopedia-of-the-essay/alain-emile-auguste-chartier/>)

Message by the Project Manager; Mr. Joji WATANABE

— Kenya: Towards the 1st Miracle Country in Africa —

Having been engaged in various projects in Kenya, the Trade Training Programme for SME exporters, firstly as a trainer in TOT in 2007 and as the project manager for this project since 2010 up to now, I have identified a few major concepts needed to make a breakthrough for Kenya's economy as follows.

1. “Kaizen”

“Kaizen” is a Japanese word often used in our daily life, which means Kai (change) and Zen (good) making the whole meaning of “Continuous Improvement”. Kaizen does not require money, because it is about mindsets of the people first. When we change our mindsets more productive and more positive in our private life, business life and in the society, we will produce more value, from which we can invest in training, machine tools, etc.

2. “Value Management”

Both Kaizen and Value Management are based on strengths of Japanese management philosophy. Value (for customers) Management infuses strong customer-orientation by overcoming egoistic perspectives of service suppliers. In organization management, Value Management requires executives to be humble enough to listen to the low levels, and act not only as directors but also as facilitators to support the operations and the environment so that the whole workforce can work effectively and efficiently.

3. “All engaged”

Contrary to most concepts in management training, Kaizen has nothing to do with elitism. Kaizen is not for elite only, but it is for everyone. Anyone of the society can apply Kaizen and improve oneself. It is different from higher education, because higher education is good only for those with some wealth and/or rare opportunities in Africa. But to make Kenya the 1st Miracle Country in Africa, we need all the people in Kenya working together to create a strong economy, which can be realized by “Sound & Strong Kaizen Mindsets” among the people.

4. “Koh”

The concept of “Koh” which literally means the public in Japanese can also play an important role to improve the behavior of the people. With the concept of “Koh”, everybody should feel responsible for the state of the public, the economy and the environment in which all can contribute to the better livings as the elements of the society, because one is part of all. Based on Koh“, people give more than they receive. People even work for the public free of charge. Individually a little, but collectively a lot making the whole society a great place to live.

I want to encourage all the Kenyans to consider these issues, because I believe you all together can double or even triple the development pace of the economy by tackling them to make Kenya the 1st Miracle Country in Africa.



Joji WATANABE