

# Trends

## South Sudan

### JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka Brings Message of Cooperation to South Sudan



A group photo after talks with President Salva Kiir Mayardit.

This January, JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka made a three-day visit to South Sudan to meet with government dignitaries and visit the sites of ODA projects. In the capital of Juba, Mr. Kitaoka held talks with President Salva Kiir Mayardit and cabinet ministers. During the wide-ranging discussions, Mr. Kitaoka was thanked for JICA's long years of cooperation, and everyone present expressed their hope for the early resumption and completion of JICA grant aid projects, particularly the Freedom Bridge and water supply facilities in Juba. Mr. Kitaoka was also an invited guest to the opening ceremony of National Unity Day. Here he talked about the significance of promoting peace and social cohesion through sports, and reflected on the elements essential to the development of the country, such as a sense of unity and acceptance of fairness and diversity. He added that he wants all participants to take a leading role and act as peace ambassadors to promote peace and development in South Sudan.

Accompanied by the Minister of Roads and Bridges Rebecca Joshua Okwaci, Mr. Kitaoka visited the site of Freedom Bridge, the construction of which has been suspended since the unfortunate events that occurred in South Sudan in July 2016. South Sudanese government officials told Mr. Kitaoka that all South Sudanese people eagerly await the resumption and completion of the project. While acknowledging that humanitarian assistance is essential, Mr. Kitaoka said that in order to achieve peace and stability in South Sudan, and advance as a nation, South Sudan needs development projects such as the Freedom Bridge, and JICA is committed to cooperating on restarting the bridge project and completing it quickly. In his role as JICA president, Mr. Kitaoka was able to reconfirm JICA's commitment to further contribute to the peace, stability, and economic development of South Sudan, and expressed his heartfelt desire to actively foster stronger relationships with the country.

## Africa

### Africa Aims for Growth in the Blue Economy



The new container terminal at the Port of Mombasa (foreground).

The Blue Economy is a concept used to promote sustainable economic growth through oceans, rivers, lakes and other water resources. This dual idea of environmental protection and development is getting attention in Africa, not only because it provides employment and critical nutrition to some of the continent's most vulnerable communities, but also for its potential to transform the broader economy of a country. JICA is supporting the Blue Economy in Africa through cooperation for fisheries, maritime transport and logistics, and infrastructure development.

People from more than 170 countries and international agencies attended the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference 2018, held last November in Nairobi, Kenya. During one of the thematic panel discussions, Shunji Sugiyama, a JICA senior advisor, explained his work in helping the Morocco government encourage small-scale fishers and develop aquaculture, and highlighted the Blue Economy's potential for generating employment when in-

tegrated with tourism and local product development. He is also supporting South-South cooperation by Morocco with countries in sub-Saharan Africa, in which Morocco is sharing its experience of the fisheries sector development in partnership with Japan. At a plenary session on smart shipping and port development, Masahiko Furuichi, a JICA senior advisor, emphasized the importance of ports in the global supply chain, and the challenge of significant congestion they face as world maritime trade increases. Improving the connectivity of ports and hinterland by inland railways and roads in one integrated system enables smooth evacuation of containers and helps ease port congestion. Supported by JICA's loan assistance and technical cooperation, a new container terminal to facilitate international trade to and from Africa was completed in February 2016 at the Port of Mombasa, Kenya. JICA is committed to the ongoing improvement of port-related infrastructure as part of its contribution to the wider development of the Blue Economy.

## Western Balkans

### Businesses in the Western Balkans Learning from Japan



A mentor advises a Macedonian SME manager.

Well known for providing detailed management advice, Japanese-style support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is spreading to the Western Balkan countries, a part of Europe still coming to terms with the aftermath of conflict. SMEs make up the majority of domestic companies in this region and are considered key to stimulating the economy and expanding employment. However, due to limited resources and qualified personnel, it has been difficult to provide sufficient high-quality government services for assisting SMEs.

The Business Adviser System is a system unique to Japan that enables public institutions to support SMEs. JICA has trained employees of public SME support agencies in the region to become mentors. While learning business fundamentals in the classroom, the mentors actually visit SMEs and interview the managers on the problems they face, and undertake workplace train-

ing after being certified. SMEs, especially recent start-ups, rarely can afford to pay consulting fees to private consultants and have a hard time getting the advice they need. A government's dispatching of mentors to SMEs that want management advice is an effective solution to this problem. Unlike consultants who tend to provide too-professional and overly-technical methods that SMEs may find difficult to follow, mentors are reassuring supporters who get close to managers and carry on a dialogue to support them in improving business results. The 10-year-plus initiative has succeeded in starting a comprehensive mentoring service; in Serbia, 55 graduates are currently working as mentors to advise SMEs, and the service has spread from Serbia to surrounding countries. This successful model of Japanese-style support for SMEs is now being adopted in other countries in the Western Balkans, and is even spreading to other areas such as Viet Nam and Ethiopia.