

## **REPUBLIC DAY GET-TOGETHER FOR THE GHANAIAN COMMUNITY IN JAPAN**

The Embassy of Ghana in Tokyo, organised a Republic Day get-together for the Ghanaian Community living in Japan on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2015. The event was planned to celebrate the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Republic Day of Ghana. The event was well attended by a cross section of Ghanaians (about 120 people), and took place at the Saitaman Hall of Kanagawa Prefecture.

The Guest of Honour was Ghana's Ambassador to Japan, H. E. Sylvester. J. K. Parker-Allotey, who attended the forum with all staff of the Embassy.

Ambassador addressed the gathering on various topics which were of concern to Ghanaians living in Japan. He explained some of the main ingredients of the Diaspora Engagement Policy of the Government which included the following:

- The provision of information to the Ghanaian Diaspora about government's social and economic development initiatives and the general situation in the country through the Diaspora Affairs Website, to enable those who wish to be directly engaged in activities in Ghana to do so through the website (*ghanaiandiaspora.com*). The site was to complement listening events such as the Republic Day event which was also to hear the community in Japan on national affairs;
- Ensuring that the inputs of the Ghanaian Diaspora strengthen and impact positively on the government's policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- The establishment of a link between the Ghanaian Diaspora and the Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Ghana, especially in sectors seeking private participation in investments as well as public-private partnership projects; and
- Ensuring that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration will be an advocate for the Ghanaian Diaspora in its dealing with the other government institutions.

The Ambassador also called on the Ghanaian community to reflect on events back in Ghana, whilst contributing individually and collectively towards national

development. He mentioned that there has been good news for Ghanaians in Japan, as the Embassy has been selected as one of the Ghana missions abroad for the processing of bio-metric passports. The embassy, he said was working in conjunction with the passport office and the relevant authorities in Accra as well as the company responsible for the biometric passport equipment, to put in place the necessary measures to ensure a smooth transition from the old passport regime to the bio-metric system for Ghanaians in Japan. In the same regard, Ambassador Parker-Allotey encouraged all Ghanaians in Japan to endeavor to register with the Embassy as a matter of duty and facilitate the provision of assistance to compatriots that may stand in need. He also added that registration was important for planning and co-ordination purposes.

Another concern of the gathering which the Ambassador elaborated on was the Representation of the People's Amendment Act (ROPAA) which, he said provided measures for the Ghanaians in Diaspora to vote during the Presidential and Parliamentary elections every four years. He mentioned, however, that the Act charged the Electoral Commission with its implementation. As an Independent Constitutional creation, the Commission cannot be directed by Government as to how it should carry out its duties. He also said that some genuine constraints faced by the Commission have been raised and these include lack of resources to conduct polls externally apart from verification difficulties to ensure that only genuine Ghanaians take part in voting externally. He said Ghanaians residing in countries where Ghana has no Diplomatic representation may be disadvantaged. Furthermore, those living in big countries like US, India, China or even Japan may have to travel to some designated locations to exercise their franchise since it may not be possible to open many polling stations in big countries. He was hopeful that although the Commission had tarried, it would sort out all problems and fully implement the law eventually, for Ghanaians in the Diaspora to exercise their franchise.

He ended by saying that Ghanaians abroad, could in the interim share best practices for those countries whose citizens vote abroad, with the Electoral Commission for some positive lessons to be drawn to assist with our own implementation challenges.

Finally, he called on Ghanaians in Japan to form an umbrella National Group that would operate broadly for the benefit of all Ghanaians in the country, instead of splitting our front along narrow ethnic lines. He said it should be possible to meet as Ghanaians bound together by the motherland and patriotism, to promote national causes.

Food, drinks and Ghanaian music were offered to the participants who enjoyed the day and are looking forward to it as an Annual affair.

**GHANA EMBASSY,  
TOKYO**

14<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2014