

Interview with Ghanaian Ambassador to Japan, H.E. Mrs. Genevieve Edna Apaloo

Japan is a Trusted Partner of Ghana – a Win-Win Relationship in Investment & Rules-Based Economy

By Mukesh Williams and Naoyuki Haraoka

Introduction

Japan SPOTLIGHT met Ghana's ambassador to Japan, H.E. Mrs. Genevieve Edna Apaloo in Tokyo on Feb. 3, 2026, where she highlighted the collaboration between Ghana and Japan, stretching over a century. Calling Japan a trusted partner, she singled out the developmental role of JICA and the seminal work of bacteriologist Hideo Noguchi in Ghana. The ambassador discussed wide-ranging topics connected to free trade, investment, critical minerals, agriculture, mining, technology transfer, rules-based economy, the Global South, supply chains, climate resilience, African philosophy, and student exchanges. As an emerging leader in West Africa, Ghana has been a reliable partner of Japan in a win-win relationship.

Haraoka: Before Mukesh starts the interview, I want to introduce our organization. We publish *Japan SPOTLIGHT*, a bimonthly, which focuses on international topics. For the April issue we are going to highlight the Global South, which is important for us Japanese. We are going to talk about bilateral relations and make as many friends as possible. We would like to explore future relations with your country in terms of economic, business, and cultural interests.

Williams: Thank you very much for inviting us. Ghana is a very important country for Japan, and the rest of the world. I was asking Haraoka-san to create a small scholarship which would allow Ghanaian student to apprentice at *Japan SPOTLIGHT* and at a Japanese university. This would provide the student with an understanding of Japan and develop a connection with the country.

Ambassador Apaloo: Thank you so much. Your words have really warmed my heart, mainly because I'm trying to find opportunities for students and faculty from Ghana to have interactions with Japanese institutions. This is the core work that we are doing. Education is one of the ways we can put our people together and they can learn from each other. I'm going to look forward to learning from you soon even if the exchange is for one week, as it has a lot of impact on our people who come here. So please let's work in it.



H.E. Mrs. Genevieve Edna Apaloo

Williams: Soon Tokyo Fuji Art Museum is going to hold an exhibition on Ghana called "Pathway to Cultural Exchange with the World" highlighting JICA and Noguchi's legacy.

Ambassador Apaloo: We are opening an exhibition on Friday Feb. 7 at 1 p.m., so please join us. We are promoting trade and investment and other forms of bilateral relations between Ghana and Japan. I can say that the relationship between the two countries has been on the ascendency. You might recall that few months back in August the TICAD 9 Summit was held and Ghana showed a strong presence in it. John Damani, our president, led the delegation chairing

some of the sessions as the second vice chairperson. Besides that, he took advantage of having bilateral meetings with Japan and promoted investment opportunities in Ghana. He met Japanese government officials at the highest level as well as many Japanese business partners, companies, and entrepreneurs on bilateral issues.

Beyond that to be able to reach out to as many people in the business community as possible we also held the Ghana Solo Business Forum in collaboration with JETRO. It was a huge success because it provided a platform for more than 150 participants to come and listen to 'Why invest in Ghana?' 'What Ghana is worth?' 'What Ghana represents in Africa?'

You mentioned the Global South. It is a name that encompasses a wide range of countries – from huge economies to smaller and emerging economies. Even if you take Africa as a continent, it is another vast area – so many countries, different sizes, different

economies, and different resources. I would mention about West Africa – that is Ghana. It is the second-largest economy in Africa. Why come to Ghana in West Africa? The location is the best in the world. We are situated almost at the center of the world. So it is one of the best in the world in terms of access. Travel to Ghana is very convenient. Most of the international airlines go to Ghana daily.

So connecting to Ghana is not difficult at all. Stability, stable government, and friendly people welcome you to come. We have human capacity as well as natural resources. This combination creates business for any technology or investment. Beyond this the legal regime for investment is very, very good. The constitution protects investors. So your investment is secure in Ghana. We have an independent court system – the judiciary is very independent and as reliable as any judiciary anywhere. Issues of conflict are part of human life. But when they do arise you are sure of having a fair hearing. I think within that spectrum of what an investor can find we stand out as one of the best places in Africa. Let me stop here and listen to some of your other questions.

Japanese Investment in Ghana

Williams: Please feel free to add to the questions and we will shape our conversation accordingly. Cooperation between Ghana and Japan, you have already answered. What opportunities Ghana offers to Japanese businesses, you have also answered. So how can Ghana attract Japanese investment?

Ambassador Apaloo: The global supply chain has shifted and is changing constantly. What used to be reliable allies and partners are now very fluid. It means you have to diversify and make sure you don't put all your eggs in one basket. Africa is a resource-rich continent and there is a mad rush to partner with it. Africa is also interested in partnership. We want reliable partners in Ghana, and we love old partners. Japan has been from time immemorial a very dependable partner. That is why we want Japanese investors to come to Ghana because we want to operate in a win-win environment. In the past decades, my experience has shown that in our engagement with Japanese counterparts we have had one of the best outcomes for the country in terms of quality, in terms of loyalty, and in terms of sharing outcomes.

So for us, for Ghana, whether Japanese business chooses us or not, we have chosen the country we want to do business with. We are there as trustworthy partners. We have the resources not only material but also human capacity. We have a population that is well-educated, a youthful population, eager to be trained. Japanese businesses don't have the manpower to live and work in Ghana, but we have the manpower that can be trained to do the work for Japanese businesses. Japanese businesses also have the technology which is suitable for transforming our natural resources into value-

added products. Our objective is to also provide jobs and opportunities to our youth.

In the service sector, we have well-educated youth, good in the use of digital technology. In any service sector or offshoring sector that Japanese businesses want, our people are ready and capable to provide support. Ghana provides diversification of the supply chain for Japan quite reliably. All our past presidents have been friends of Japan. Our current president used to be with the Japanese Embassy as a young man and had a very strong relationship with Japan for a long time. He even maintains a strong relationship with his colleagues who went with him when he was a staff member in the Japanese Embassy in Accra. During his recent visit to Japan, he had afternoon tea with five of them. So that shows how strong our connection with Japan is. Our history with Japan goes back to bacteriologist Hideo Noguchi. Next year and in the coming few years we will have many anniversaries connected with Noguchi's time in Ghana. In 2027 we celebrate the centenary of his arrival in Ghana. The Ghanaians hold him in high esteem, and anything connected to Japan flowing from him is held in high esteem. We hope that with this strong basis of relationship the Japanese can see Ghana as a strategic partner in this resource diversification and supply diversification.

Williams: Are there any bottlenecks that you feel can be removed to accelerate investment from Japan to Ghana and for people from Ghana to come to Japan?

Ambassador Apaloo: The main bottleneck is hesitancy and I want to take this opportunity to assure the Japanese that distance is not an issue in this modern world, language is not an issue as most Japanese speak English and Ghanaians speak English. So the raw material they need for their business is not difficult to procure as Ghana has an abundance of resources to partner with the Japanese. It is a time to test the waters and be confident. The Embassy of Ghana is here to facilitate and assist any Japanese business which is willing to see Ghana as a place of investment. In addition to the Embassy of Ghana we have the Japanese Embassy which promotes effective relations between the two countries. JETRO is in Ghana and therefore we have the machinery, both government and private, to be able to support the activities of any Japanese company that intends to go to Ghana. I think we can move beyond the fear of risk. Africa is not a risky place to do business. As for free trade between Japan and Ghana, we are doing a lot to promote Ghana and Africa as a place for strong investment.

Views on Free Trade

Williams: Free trade has been attacked by big powers. But free trade is an important component business. What is your perspective on it?

Ambassador Apaloo: Without robust trade the international system would grind to a halt. Ghana and Japan share values of multilateralism, international trade and working together as partners in the international community, especially at the UN and other international organizations. We have worked together as strong partners, and promoted openness in international trade and international interaction. We have chosen Japan as one of our partners and want Japan to be strongly visible. We have had Meiji buying cocoa from Ghana for almost a century, and Lotte has been buying cocoa from Ghana for over 52 years. Toyota has been doing business for decades and has now established a small assembly plant in Ghana. Toyota, Honda, and Suzuki are now assembling numbers of cars in Ghana. So with all these companies there, it should give assurance about what companies are doing in Ghana – it's possible, it's profitable and it is good for Japanese business.

Haraoka: Do you think manufacturing companies are more welcome?

Ambassador Apaloo: You are right. Ghana has the space, manpower and other resources that can support any establishment of business, in terms of requirements like power. Ghana has a stable supply of electricity for running businesses. We need light manufacturing industries. We are open to any company that can 1) add value to our raw materials, 2) use our new abundant manpower, and 3) harness our labor force (which is cheap in Ghana).

Williams: Some African countries and the Global South are keen to shift from gasoline-based cars to electric cars. Have there been any requests from Ghana to Japan to invest in e-vehicles?

Ambassador Apaloo: Yes, this is one of the discussions that our president conducted with an automobile company when he came to Japan. He urged them to diversify into e-vehicles in Ghana. There are several automobile companies in Ghana from Japan and other parts of the world like Europe. It is an ambition to make an automobile hub. Not only with Japan but with all other partners we are discussing ways to introduce e-vehicles.

Williams: Would it be a partnership, or would you want Japanese companies to totally invest to create e vehicles?

Ambassador Apaloo: They are most welcome.

Technology Transfers Expected

Williams: What kind of technology transfer would you expect from Japan to Ghana? Which area would be

number one in your mind?

Ambassador Apaloo: Ghana is an agriculture-based economy. Agriculture-based technologies and mineral extraction are the areas where we would like Japan to help.

Williams: What about water-based technology, would that be useful too?

Ambassador Apaloo: That is what I would like. But I think any technology is useful technology. Water is one key area. No one can survive without water. We are also interested in partnering with Japan in AI – sharing our knowledge. We also seek collaboration with Japan in the space sector. Space is one of the strong imagined economic sectors as well. It is one of the areas in which we have signed an MoU with Japan. We hope to be working closely with Japan in this field.

Views on Climate Change

Williams: What are your views on climate resilience or overcoming climate shocks?

Ambassador Apaloo: Ghana, like any other country, is interested in combating extreme climate change based on sustainable development. We are partnering with other like-minded countries like Japan. We try to be compliant with SDGs goals and we are also helping to achieve some of the goals we have agreed together with other international partners.

Williams: Climate change is creating drought in different parts of the world where irrigation is important. How would you like Japan to invest in irrigation and water conservation?

Ambassador Apaloo: Conserving water resources and limiting water wastage is quite important. Beyond that, introducing agricultural products that can survive during long periods of drought is also necessary. We are working with some of the Japanese companies to introduce enhanced agricultural products in Ghana, especially in the northern parts where there are droughts and long dry spells. Recently we have come across some companies which have excellent plants that grow in dry weather. We hope that between the two governments we can collaborate.

We are also looking at universities and research institutions to understand the impact of these new products on agriculture. You rightly said water management is a very important part of addressing climate change and adapting to extreme weather patterns and changes in our rainfall pattern. We have reached a point where if we rely only on rainfall, we will not be able to meet our production

needs. But we can get enough water to grow plants and ensure an adequate harvest if we use of irrigation technology and water conservation. By implementing these methods, we can promote sustainable farming practices that benefit both farmers and the environment.

Student Exchange Between Ghana & Japan

Williams: How can we make student exchange programs between Ghana and Japan stronger and big?

Ambassador Apaloo: Let me say that the embassy is open and ready to assist any university or Japanese institutions looking for partners to explore internationalization. Over the last three or four years we have been making a strong outreach to investors to expand their interactions with Ghanaian universities. The results are showing. Recently we have had several delegations from Ghanaian universities to Japan and vice versa; universities like Tsukuba University have sent numerous delegations to Ghana. This year the University of Ghana sent a delegation which has just left Japan after a successful trip.

One factor that limits exchange is language. We are collaborating with faculties within universities that provide English language programs, both long-term courses and short-term programs. As you rightly said when students go through Ghana or Africa they come back with broadened perspectives and a more focused outlook on life because they meet people who impact their lives. It helps them to see life from a different perspective than what they were used to in Japan – taking everything for granted and living in their secure bubble. So any exchange program between Ghana and Japan will not only benefit Ghanaians but also Japanese. You can take, for example, the Japan Association for African Studies (JAIA) volunteers who go to Ghana and other parts of the world. Next year we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the JICA volunteer program in Ghana. We have been able to sustain the program except during the Covid period.

It is safe for Japanese students and faculty members to go to Ghana, experience another culture and come back, and improve their lives, their drive and vision for themselves. For this we need scholarships which would provide opportunities to brilliant but needy students to be able to improve their future. We have many partners from Hokkaido, such as Sapporo University, and in the south of Japan. We have been collaborating with Sakura Science Exchange Program (SSP) too. Some universities can curate programs specifically to the needs of the universities in Japan. What we should be doing is making these programs more well known, creating awareness, as most students are focused on going to the West because that is what they know. They don't know of the opportunities here in Japan. We must create more awareness, which

we are doing with my counterpart ambassador of Japan in Ghana.

Views on WTO

Haraoka: What do you think about the WTO, which is unfortunately losing power but is still important in promoting a rules-based international order which makes business activity predictable? Today the WTO is led by an African woman. What do you think about the WTO?

Ambassador Apaloo: I share your views completely. Business should not be tied to uncertainty. This period we are going through I pray may be a brief phase that we are all witnessing. Coming from a rules-based era, we will move quickly to restore some stability in the world. Ghana will continue to partner with like-minded countries such as Japan to ensure there is calm and stability in the world. That is my brief answer to your question.

Role of African Philosophy

Haraoka: Japanese are very much interested in African philosophy. African philosophy highlights harmonization whereas some Western philosophies highlight problems of confrontation.

Ambassador Apaloo: I think Africa and Asia share lots in common – similar cultures, similar values. The more we interact the more we will be able to ensure that this inherent culture and nature is preserved, because that forms the basis of what we are doing as an embassy to share our culture with the Japanese. And we also expect that the more we promote interactions between Japanese and Ghanaians, the more our Ghanaian children will be able to value our own culture, because Japan is one of the countries which has preserved its culture over the years despite modernization and strong engagement with the West. So I want our children to grow up knowing that we can develop while maintaining our culture, and that is the message we are trying to promote through the frequent interactions we are pursuing between Ghanaians and Japanese. Asia and Africa – same people, same culture and we must preserve that for the future.

Haraoka: Thank you very much.

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