

Japan gives Ghana \$85mil grant for road project

By [Kwaku Osei Bonsu](#)

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Japan has announced an \$85 million grant to support the construction of the Yamoransa-Kumasi road project in Ghana.

The country has also expressed readiness to make further financial assistance available in the form of concessionary loan that might be needed to enable the entire stretch to be completed.

This followed bilateral talks held Tuesday between Ghanaian President John Agyekum Kufuor and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda at the Intercontinental Hotel in the port city of Yokohama, ahead of the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV).

Ghana is one of the three countries in Africa which Japan has selected to focus its attention on in terms of development cooperation and technical support and assistance of its Overseas Cooperation Volunteers in the execution of socio-economic projects in the remotest parts.

Speaking to the media after the closed-door talks, Presidential Press Secretary Andrew Awuni said the Japanese Prime Minister had pledged his country's commitment to help Ghana deal with its water and electricity shortfalls.

President Kufuor had requested assistance to help cope with the growing demand of the fast expanding communities.

Prime Minister Fukuda used the occasion to reinforce the determination of Japan to ensure that TICAD IV comes out with concrete measures and an action plan to drive the development agenda of Africa.

Its policy recommendations would feed into the world's eight leading industrialised nations (G8) summit to be hosted by the Asian country later this year.

He also recognised the leadership President Kufuor was providing not only for Ghana but the continent and said for this it had been decided that he should be part of the Outreach session of the G8 meeting, a rare opportunity given only to sitting Chairman of the African Union (AU).

President Kufuor conveyed the continent's appreciation to Japan for its development support, saying it has been a genuine friend of Africa.

Japan launched TICAD in 1993 to focus international attention on the importance and urgency of African development issues and this triggered the recent political and economic trend with China, India, South Korea, Brazil and the European

Union (EU), all joining to establish partnerships with the continent.

He asked for Japan's backing for the United Nations (UN) Security Council reform to help Africa to secure permanent membership seat on the Council.

President Kufuor had earlier addressed the Yokohama City Council, where he re-affirmed the importance Ghana attached to its relations with Japan and TICAD, the global framework for Asian-African collaboration in promoting the continent's progress.

He said his expectation was that the three-day TICAD IV would strengthen and boost Africa's economic growth as well as enhance education, health and human security.

Besides, he said, he was hopeful that it would impact positively on issues of the environment, climate change and would create an action plan for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Ghana and Japan had been drawn to each other for decades, a relationship anchored by the Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, the Japanese medical scientist who died in Ghana in 1927 while researching yellow fever, has launched his research career in Yokohama.

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