

## **SECURITY SITUATION IN KENYA**

Kenya experienced post-election violence after the December 2007 general elections. Many lives were lost and property destroyed during the mayhem. However, most observers say the clashes were a blessing in disguise as it translated into a more peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic communities in the country.

The coalition government that was formed after peace was brokered between the two opposing sides has brought Kenyans closer than ever before in post-independence era.

The issue of insecurity is now history in the minds of most Kenyans as the country continues to progress both socially and economically. There are a lot of activities going on in the various socio-economic sectors including road construction projects, property development, trading and investment.

The Nairobi Stock Exchange has seen an upsurge in its daily transactions, which have been greatly boosted by the influx of foreign investors in the stock market due to the conducive investment climate prevailing in the country. Kenyans have also gained a renewed confidence in their country and are investing heavily.

The economic policies being pursued by the government have won praise from bilateral and multilateral partners who have expressed optimism that Kenya's economy will reach great heights of development. The World Bank has ranked Kenya highly in terms of conducive business environment and has encouraged foreign investors to venture into the country's emerging business opportunities.

Kenya boasts the largest and most stable economies in Eastern and Central Africa and many international organizations have set up their regional offices in Nairobi. A few examples are Microsoft, Nokia, Coca Cola, Unilever, Siemens etc.

In terms of trade promotion activities, major trading nations have regional commercial trade promotional offices in Kenya. A few

examples – JETRO, KOTRA, MATRADE, DEP Thailand, ECIP China and commercial offices in most of the countries with diplomatic missions in Kenya including Australia, UK, Egypt, Italy, France and many other EU, African and Asian countries.

With the promulgation of a new constitution in September 2010, Kenya has now become one of the most preferred trading and investment destinations in Africa. Kenya Investment Authority and Export Processing Zones have reported an upsurge in enquiries for investment opportunities in Kenya which signifies the renewed confidence Kenya has gained in the world stage.

As far as trading is concerned, Kenya has the strongest economy in this region and is the most ideal country which foreign exporters could use as a springboard to enter the regional markets. Already, Kenya is the largest exporter to the 19-member COMESA region and the 5-member EAC. Any serious exporter should therefore view Kenya as the focal point of penetrating the markets in the region.

While presenting their credentials to President Mwai Kibaki recently, the new envoys of Australia, Japan, France, Norway, South Africa and Kuwait praised the Kenya government for the steps it has taken to make Kenya a great trade and investment destination through implementing positive measures.

Nairobi, like most other major cities of the world, has challenges on security issues but the relevant administrative organs have been doing their best to address these challenges. The police department recently reported that the rate of crime has declined drastically with further positive projections forecast in the coming months.

In view of the above issues, Kenya must be viewed as an emerging market for potential suppliers from major developing countries and the issues of security should not be used to deter exporters determined to venture into the market. Kenya has some of the most forthright business people in Africa and traditional suppliers in the west are well aware of this.