

Remarks by Mr. Takeshi Akamatsu,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan
to the Republic of South Sudan,
on the Occasion of the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan

3 December 2014

Hon. Mr. Peter Bashir Gbandi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International
Cooperation,
Distinguished Guests,
Colleagues from the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
My friends,

Good evening,

Thank you very much for joining us today in celebration of the 81st birthday of His
Majesty Emperor Akihito of Japan.

When we gathered here last year for His 80th birthday, just less than a week before
December 15 and few days after the successful South Sudan Investment Forum, this
country seemed to be in full of hope, full of dreams full of prospects for the bright future.

Less than a year from then, we find ourselves in more somber atmosphere tonight, just as
Dù Fǔ, one of the greatest Chinese poets of all times lamented in his famous poem “Spring
View”;

The nation is shattered. Only the landscape remains.
Has spring come again? Yes, Trees unpruned and weeds overgrown.
But flowers weep with tears of discouragement,
And birds sing in deploring separation.
(...)

For Dù Fǔ, three months of sustained war was more than enough to deplore the devastation of his country.

So it is not difficult for us to imagine the feelings of nearly 2million South Sudanese who had to flee their homes for much longer period, not to mention of those who have unduly lost their lives during this crisis. Our sympathies and prayers are always with them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is neither my duty nor intention to enumerate what this country has gone through; we all know that.

However, I would still wish to point out that this is a man-made disaster, and only through strong will and commitment of the people, could it be brought to an end. Therefore let me reiterate our call on both warring parties to stop the hostilities at once and give peace a chance to this new born nation, a country three years old who had spent one third of its history in self destruction. This does not make any sense at all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Against the backdrop of on-going crisis, Japan has extended approximately 43.6 million USD of humanitarian assistance in 2014. After announcing our new pledges at the Oslo conference in May, Japan was one of the first to make these funds fully available to various international organizations.

Enhancing our commitment to the on-going peace process, Japan has also enlarged its financial contribution in support of the activities of IGAD.

Last but not least, our Engineering Contingent under UNMISS spared no efforts in supporting IDPs in Juba by providing clean water, sanitary latrines, medical services etc. from the day one of the crisis, and the efforts, including consolidation of a new PoC site near UN House, are continuing today.

Japan will continue to support the people of South Sudan in their darkest hours. While we

strongly urge all the stakeholders in this country to bring an immediate end to all hostilities, and to assure unhindered access for humanitarian relief, we renew our commitments to keep standing side by side with the people of South Sudan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year our bilateral relations between Japan and South Sudan have turned a new page with the participation of President Salva Kiir Mayardit at the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, TICAD V.

Throughout the 20 years' history of TICAD, "partnership" and "ownership" have been the underlying philosophy: "partnership" of international community, including Japan, with African countries that demonstrate "ownership" in development of their countries.

"Ownership" not only applies for development. As an inherent rule, every country and government have the responsibility to protect their own people, and are accountable for solving problems within their own territories. Lack of "ownership" only tarnishes their image among international community, as "Partnership" of international community only comes after that.

With a view to enhancing our "partnership" with African countries, next round of TICAD will take place not in Japan but on African soil in early 2016, much sooner than the original 5 years interval.

I sincerely hope that the next TICAD meeting would welcome South Sudan, having overcome the current difficulties. We believe in the wisdom of all the stakeholders of this country in demonstrating their ownership and in bringing South Sudan back on track for prosperous future, which all South Sudanese have fought for.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, 2014, marks the 60 years' anniversary of the commencement of Japanese Official Development Assistance. While our assistance began as technical cooperation, one of its consistent convictions is support for "self-help" efforts. And our cooperation

with South Sudan is no exception.

Therefore it was with a great disappointment that Japan, along with other donors, was obliged to suspend our cooperation activities due to confusion and insecurity arising from the conflict last year. Reference to the entire loss of JICA compound in Malakal suffices to explain why.

While we continue our humanitarian assistance, we also believe this alone will not help prepare this new nation for the future. And even for the delivery of humanitarian materials, key infrastructure is vital.

It is under this notion, and after careful consideration, that Japan has decided to resume several of our cooperation programs in support of development of South Sudan, including, inter alia, the new bridge over the Nile. JICA office is back in Juba, and preparations for resumption of other projects are also underway.

This may require some time. Because restoring confidence once lost is not an easy task, and this could not and should not come in a “business as usual” manner, and taken for granted.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, I began my speech with an apology; sorry, that apology still stands. There is no SUSHI tonight.

But today, we have some miniature SUSHI to give you at least an idea what it should look like. Of course, it's only a paper moon, served over a cardboard plate. But it wouldn't be make-believe, if we believe in South Sudan with sustained peace and prosperous future.

Thank you.

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