

Remarks by Mr. Takeshi AKAMATSU,  
Ambassador of Japan to South Sudan  
On the Occasion of the Ground-breaking Ceremony for  
The Project for Construction of Nile River Bridge

On 19 March 2015, Juba, South Sudan

H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic of South Sudan  
Hon. Minister Kwong Danhier Gatluak, Minister of Transport, Roads and Bridges  
Hon. Governor Clement Wani Konga, Governor of Central Equatoria State  
Honorable Ministers, Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,

My Friends from the Diplomatic Corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my great pleasure and honor to welcome H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit on the occasion of the ground-breaking ceremony of “The Project for Construction of the Nile River Bridge” today.

As we all know, this bridge would have been half completed by now, if this country had not suffered from the crisis since December 2013. Some of you might recall my speeches at our National Day receptions where I had announced the commencement of the bridge for nearly over two years. I am therefore particularly pleased that this is finally happening today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I arrived in Juba in 2012, there were three major infrastructure projects to be inaugurated; they are “Improvement of Juba River Port”, “Improvement of Water Supply

System of Juba” and finally this “Nile River Bridge”. All of these three projects have been suspended because of the conflict, as our consultants and engineers had to leave the country over security concerns, making it impossible to pursue the schedule.

Suspended as they were for uncertain period, I am grateful to note that, upon my personal request, Hon. Minister Kuong Danhir Gatluak, himself was quick to visit this site and to make necessary arrangements to keep all the material and equipment intact, so as to secure prompt resumption of the project. I thank him wholeheartedly for the “ownership” he has demonstrated over these 15 months.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Ownership” along with “partnership” is a key concept of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), to which you, Mr. President, participated two years ago. I sincerely wish that the people of South Sudan will continue to demonstrate “ownership”, so that after its completion, this bridge will be maintained by the people of South Sudan as a long-lasting symbol of friendship between the peoples of our two countries.

On completion, this new bridge, a grant assistance amounting approximately to 91 million USD in cost, will boast 560 meter in length, coupled with access road stretching 3,640meters. Named “Freedom Bridge” in 2013, the bridge will be a key infrastructure, and serve as an essential backbone for the successful development of this new country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recently, Vice President of the Republic, H.E. James Wani Igga, was in Japan to attend the 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, a forum Japan has been hosting in memory of the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, as well as in recognition of the solidarity then the world community, including South Sudan had expressed toward Japan. Leaders from the world discussed the ways and means to minimize the damage and enhance resilience of the people, from both natural and human-made disasters.

This is one of the reasons why while we continue to provide humanitarian assistance to South Sudan, -Japan committed 88 million USD at High-Level Event on Humanitarian Crisis of South Sudan held in Nairobi last month.- we also believe that development assistance is crucially important for enhancing resilience and for the future of this country. Mr. Furukawa from JICA has just introduced you some of our activities, so I would not repeat them here.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This new bridge that we are inaugurating today, will not only connect both sides of the Nile. But also, as its name “Freedom Bridge” suggests, the bridge will become a monument of incarnation of the aspirations of all the people of South Sudan.

“Freedom” implies many aspects of life; freedom of self-determination, freedom of speech, freedom of belief, freedom of press, freedom of movement etc.. And these various forms of “freedom” could be summarized in simple notion; ie., “Freedom from want, Freedom from fear”. This is the underlying philosophy of “Human Security”, concept that has become one of the core guiding values of Japanese diplomacy.

Human Security could only be achieved through “putting people in the center”- center of development, center of nation building. Therefore, it is under this notion of “Human Security” that Japan has been extending our cooperation, together with many like-minded countries, to the people of South Sudan.

While bridges including this “Freedom Bridge” could be built through foreign cooperations, the bridge that encompasses the deep rift of divide widened by the on-going crisis between and among the peoples of South Sudan could only be built by the people of South Sudan themselves.

Therefore, I sincerely hope that this bridge, who bears the name of “Freedom”, will serve as a symbol, and a reminder for all the stake holders in this crisis, to give peace a chance, after disappointment of the last round of Addis Ababa peace talks, so that people of South Sudan will be once again put in center of this country, for whose independence and freedom they have fought for.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan has always been standing by the people of South Sudan, before and after the independence and certainly will continue to do so. Our only overseas dispatched Self Defense Force Contingent is here under UNMISS, enhancing Japan's commitment to international endeavour in supporting the people and nation building of South Sudan. And the bridge we are inaugurating today is put before you as a symbol of our commitment and friendship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While I pray for the successful construction of the "Freedom Bridge", time has come when I reluctantly relinquish my duties as Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of South Sudan shortly and leave this beautiful country for good.

I would not say Goodbye, but instead just say "Farewell", as it is such a wonderful word of prayer, which means "fare thee well". As I wish you, Mr. President, and through you to all the South Sudanese people, regardless of their positions or whereabouts.

So,

Fare thee well, and if for ever,  
Still for ever, fare thee well;

To all my South Sudanese and international friends; I wish you all the best, as I know that you wish me the same.

Thank you.

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