

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Takeshi Akamatsu
Ambassador of Japan to South Sudan
on the occasion of Handover Ceremony for
“The Project for Maintaining Juba Na Bari Community Road”
at 14:00 on 21st November 2013, Juba, South Sudan

Honorable Deputy Minister, Mr. Simon Mijok Mijak, Ministry of Transport Roads and Bridges

H.E. Mr. Toby Lanzer, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNMISS

H.E. Mr. Christopher Sarafino Wani Swaka, Mayor of Juba City

Colonel Harutoshi Tsuchiya, Commander of Japanese Contingent to UNMISS

Mr. Atsushi Hanatani, Chief Representative, JICA South Sudan

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

In January this year, it was just like today with hot weather and beautiful blue sky shining over the community of Na Bari when we kicked off this project; “***The Project for Maintaining Juba Na Bari Community Road***”, as a grassroots infrastructure project funded by the Government of Japan with the amount of about one million forty-one thousand US dollars. Eleven months since then, engineers and workers both from Ministry of Physical Infrastructure of Central Equatoria State, and UNMISS Japanese Engineer Company have been jointly steering this project, and here we are, beautifully maintained road

is stretching out in front of us ready to be handed-over, with the witness of the community members. I am grateful and excited to be able to share this special moment with you.

Today, I stand here as a newly appointed Japanese Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan, to officially greet the people of South Sudan. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate MOPI and all those who stood behind this project including JICA South Sudan for your joint achievement. I would like to express my special gratitude to UNMISS contingent for their great engineering performance and tireless work even on the weekends with the shining blue helmets and little Japanese flag on their back, which I hope will always be remembered by the community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Government of Japan opened the Embassy in Juba this July, the momentum for the accelerated Japan-South Sudan relationship has been greater than ever. We respond to this by continuing to support UNMISS with Japanese contingent for expanding its operation into Greater Equatoria States, and by further strengthening bilateral economic cooperation with more effective use of the resources that we have. Na-Bari road project demonstrates how the resources we have could be mobilized most effectively through seeking synergy between funding from Embassy's Grant for Grassroots and Human Security Projects, technical and engineering support from UNMISS Japanese contingent and various activities by JICA.

The synergy among various Japanese actors was exercised not only at the actual construction level, but was also, and even more effectively, practiced at the community level through number of clean-up campaigns jointly carried out by the Na-Bari road project and JICA's Waste Management Capacity Building Project. This campaign mobilized a number of children, women and men from the community, and raised awareness and sense of ownership of the project by them through cleaning the road by themselves. Working together hand in hand with the community certainly nourished the friendship between Japanese and South Sudanese at individual levels, and enhanced participation and ownership of the community, which have a great implication on the sustainability of the road and drainage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The impact of the project to the community is tremendous, and it is not simply defined by the improved mobility and resilience to the flood related disaster during rainy season. As I came down the street this afternoon, I was impressed by the increased number of stalls and shops in the expanded market, and more construction work undergoing along the road, which was impassable only a year before. This road directly serves approximately 3500 households in this community, but the beneficiaries are not limited to the community; it also benefits those from outside who use this road to access the surrounding communities.

As this road is officially handed over to MOPI and the community of Na Bari today, I would like to ask you to promise that the road and drainage are well taken care of just like your back yard, and continue to benefit the local population for many years. Perhaps, making the road and drainages free of plastic bottles and garbage is the first step to be taken, and I believe that this can be done with the leadership of this community, that we have already seen as they stood up and initiated maintenance project for the better living environment for themselves.

Through this project, I learned that ‘Na-Bari’ means ‘belonging to Bari people’, and the name was applied to the project by MOPI to respect the traditional tribal territory around this area. Traditional values and culture are important for maintaining disciplines and identity for individuals and communities. Meanwhile, my hope is that this community will become a place where people from various backgrounds are able to live together, and the road not only serving as a transport utility but as a focal point of reconciliation among the people of Juba.

When we look at South Sudan, the country is like a palette with different pigments of tribes, and all these unique colors are applied to make a beautiful piece of picture that represents a country called South Sudan. As South Sudan thrives as a stable and prosperous country, I believe that ‘solidarity’ becomes the key to the real peace and sturdy foundation of the nation that must be a common goal of all South Sudanese. Juba Na Bari community is indeed a small segment of that picture, but the community that is already rich in tribes, wisdoms and vitalities would be able to share their goodness within itself and further with other communities for the future prosperity of the nation as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The road unfolding before us is not only a symbol of our partnership and friendship, but it is also the path that unites this community as one, and steps up to the next level of development. Development and prosperity are not of a given nature, and should not be taken for granted without any efforts. I hope that this project has given the community hopes, dreams, and inspirations for what they wish to achieve next and these hopes, dreams and inspirations will lead you further to make concrete efforts to achieve them. Japan is committed to continue supporting such willingness and self-efforts by the people of South Sudan.

As I close my remarks, let me reiterate that this road is one symbolic Japan-South Sudan joint achievement, and as such it will be treasured by future generations to come. But further, it is our wish that the spirit and the memory of joint engagement and efforts, exhibited and shared during the course of this project by the people of MOPI and UNMISS Japanese Engineer Company, that will live even longer than the road itself.

Thank you very much.

(End)