

**Remarks by Mr. Takeshi Akamatsu,
Special Representative and Head of the Liaison Office of the
Government of Japan in Juba,
on the Occasion of the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
13th December 2012**

Hon. Dr. Cirino Hiteng Ofuho, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports,

Hon. Mr. Emmanuel Lowilla, Minister of Office of the President,

Hon. Mr. John Luk Jok, Minister of Justice,

Hon. Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Information and
Broadcasting,

Hon. Mr. Joseph Ukel Abango, Minister of General Education and
Instruction,

Honorable Ministers,

Ms. Hilde Johnson, Special Representative of Secretary General of the
United Nations for South Sudan,

Ambassadors,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

Akio Morita, a renowned businessman and co-founder of SONY, used to start his speech by stating the following:

“Americans begin their speeches with a joke; Japanese, with an apology.”

So ladies and gentlemen, let me follow his example: There is no SUSHI tonight. My deepest apologies.

But this is not because my government is under austerity measures due to huge reconstruction needs after the Great East Japan Earthquake that hit Japan, in March last year. We are just following one of the priority areas of the Republic of South Sudan, set forth by President Salva Kiir Mayardit himself, which is “food security”. We wanted to avoid food poisoning.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now you understand how much importance and respect Japan attaches to the initiatives and thoughts of the People and the Government of South Sudan.

This is in retrospect of the fact that, President Salva Kiir Mayardit was one of the first African leaders to have written a letter to express solidarity and sympathy of the People and the Government of South Sudan with the victims of the earthquake and people of Japan last year.

So it is with deepest appreciation to the People and the Government of South Sudan and to the international community, that I welcome you all tonight at the reception in celebration of the Seventy–Ninth Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, which is 23rd December 2012.

In fact this is the first occasion for the Government of Japan to host such a reception in South Sudan, and I am much honored to have you all here tonight.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although this is the first occasion for us to host such a reception, our relation with South Sudan dates back a little further, including provision of humanitarian assistance since the agreement of CPA in 2005. But it was from the independence of the South Sudan that our relationship immediately experienced a great expansion. So allow me to briefly touch upon our relationships between Japan and South Sudan.

High-level visits followed the independence.

Japan was among the first to recognize the independence and to establish diplomatic relations with South Sudan. And Makiko KIKUTA, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs assisted at the Independence Ceremony; followed by Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ryuji YAMANE who lead a high level mission of prospecting Japanese private sector leaders.

And just last week, Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Kazuya SHIMBA visited Juba and held series of talks with President Salva Kiir Mayardit and others high level officials to seek further enhancement of the existing excellent relations between the two countries.

From South Sudan, Hon. Dr. Anne Itto, Deputy Secretary General of the SPLM, Hon. Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Information and Broadcasting were welcomed in Japan last year. Hon. Mr. Kosti Manibe, Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation visited Japan twice this year in September and October.

Not many countries in Africa have enjoyed such a close exchanges at high political level with Japan in the last 18months.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having experienced the devastations of war and reconstruction from the ruins, Japan fully understands and feels sympathy with the situation surrounding South Sudan.

And it is under such understanding that Japan has committed itself in assisting the efforts of the people of South Sudan in nation building and consolidation of peace, challenges that this country faces.

Our economic cooperation with South Sudan has been expanding. With JICA's presence since 2007, many projects are currently underway:

In agriculture, one of the priority areas for the development of South Sudan, a study team is conducting a comprehensive national master plan survey for the sector as well as one on irrigation.

In the area of capacity building; renovation of Multi-service Training Center in Juba has just been completed, and capacity building of broadcasting sector is about to commence; just to name two among many.

Infrastructure: Japan's assistances through rehabilitation of roads, ports, clean-water supply, and bridges are well recognized in this county: many bridges and roads in Juba were refurbished through grant aid, and clean water supply project is on-going in Juba.

In this context, I would like to announce that last week, the Government of Japan has decided to give grants to the construction phase

of the two projects; “Improvement of Juba River Port” and “Construction of Nile River Bridge”. Total cost would be approximately 140million US dollars. Both projects will start early next year, but please be patient, being a large scale project, completion will take some time.

Our cooperation with South Sudan is not limited to bilateral cooperation. Humanitarian relief in the field of food supply, poverty reduction, refugees support etc., are going on in close cooperation with international organizations.

All in all, since the agreement of the CPA in 2005, Japan has provided with economic assistance amounting up to more than seven hundred forty million US dollars for both South Sudan and Sudan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our commitment to the nation building of South Sudan is not limited to economic cooperation.

As a peace-loving nation, Japan has decided to cooperate with international society in the reconstruction and peace building in this new born country, through supporting the activities of UNMISS.

Currently over 330 personnel from Engineering Contingent of Japan Ground Self Defense Force are dispatched under UNMISS.

Under UNMISS mandate, they are also directly cooperating with international organizations and other partners in nation building. Their activities include construction of shelter facilities for returnees, road repairs and so on. Preparations are underway to commence reconstruction of Juba Na-Bari community road in tandem with Central Equatoria State.

Capacities of our Engineering Contingent go beyond construction and peace building; we'll be having a short performance of Japanese Drums by the members of the Contingent later this evening. So please stay tuned.

Last but not least, in order to further enhance our bilateral relations, the Government of Japan has established a Liaison Office here in Juba since last September. And pending the necessary arrangements, we look forward to expanding it into a full-fledged embassy during the course of next year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan regards the Republic of the South Sudan as one of the most important countries for achieving peace and stability in the region, as well as for Africa as a whole.

In this regard, we highly appreciate and praise South Sudan's efforts to improve and strengthen the relationships with its neighboring countries.

Japan has always been supporting and encouraging the efforts by both South Sudan and Sudan in achieving peaceful solutions to various issues and will continue to support such efforts by the two countries.

Japan welcomes particularly a series of agreements concluded between South Sudan and Sudan on September 27 in Addis Ababa and sincerely hopes that the two governments swiftly implement the agreements and promptly agree on all the remaining outstanding issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year Japan will host TICAD V - (Tokyo International Conference on African Development). Since the first TICAD in 1993, TICAD has been expanding its scope to promote high-level dialogue between African leaders and their partners so as to support African-owned development initiatives. And TICAD V will welcome African Union as a new co-organizer, along with UN, UNDP, and World Bank.

Theme of TICAD V is “Hand in hand with more dynamic Africa”. And discussion will focus on “Robust and Sustainable Economy” and “Inclusive and Resilient Society”. But “Peace and stability” remains as an underlying condition for the sustainable development of the continent. Therefore, participation of South Sudan will be a prerequisite for the success of TICAD V.

We are happy to inform you that during his meeting with Senior Vice-Minister Shimba last week, President Salva Kiir Mayardit confirmed his intention to visit Japan next June and participate in the deliberations at the TICAD V.

There is a handout at the entrance on TICAD as well as on our cooperation with South Sudan, so please take one and have a look.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

End of the year parties are called “Boh-nen-kai” in Japan, literally meaning “forget the year party”.

At the beginning of my remarks, I informed you of the lack of SUSHI tonight. But we have prepared some Japanese SAKE –Japanese rice wine- so as to help you forget whatever that you might wish to forget for the year 2012.

But this year 2012 has been an unforgettable year for the relationship between South Sudan and Japan, as the year where our relationship has really got started and expanded.

And in the hope that the coming year will be more prosperous and happy one for all of us gathered here today, may I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2013.

Thank you very much.

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