

**Remarks by Kiya Masahiko, Ambassador of Japan to South Sudan,
at the Opening Ceremony for the Second National Unity Day
at Juba National Football Stadium**

His Excellency Taban Deng Gai, the First Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan,
Honourable Deng Deng Hoc, the Minister of General Education and Instruction,
Honourable National Ministers in attendance,

Mr. Francis Mading Deng, former Ambassador of the Republic of South Sudan to the United Nations,
Honourable Salah Rajab Bunduki, Jubek State Minister of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports,
Athletes from across South Sudan,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an immense honour and privilege for me to be invited to the Opening Ceremony of the National Unity Day sporting event on behalf of the Government and the people of Japan.

I believe that this Second National Unity Day is particularly important, because this is taking place today as originally envisaged despite all the challenges which have followed the unfortunate incident in July last year. I commend the efforts and achievements of the Organizing Committee and all those, in Juba as well as from across the country, who have strived to make this year's event become a reality, as we witness today.

It was indeed a great feat to organize the historic event of the First National Unity Day last year. It is equally, or even more, important to make it a national tradition by holding the second one. There is a saying in Japan, "Little by little, one goes far". South Sudan is still a young country with full of dreams and aspirations of the people. With such

dreams and aspirations in mind, here and now, you are making a new great national tradition of holding annual sporting events in order to build a peaceful and prosperous South Sudan.

This gathering of young people from across the country reminds us of a simple fact that this is the new country of your own, blessed with one people, one nation. What Japan can do as a friend, including JICA, the Japanese Engineering Contingent of UNMISS and our Embassy, is only to support you to become successful in your endeavor.

One of the contributions that Japan can make is through the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020. This is our driving force to encourage sporting events in South Sudan and to promote various exchanges in the field of sports between our two countries. I would like to take this opportunity to express Japan's commitment to supporting South Sudan's participation in Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I understand that the people in South Sudan are facing many challenges at this moment. The key to addressing such multiple challenges is to achieve peace.

I welcome the announcement by H.E. the President last year to commence the National Dialogue. I was impressed by the pledge of H.E. the President as well as the senior leadership of the Government to make 2017 the "Year of Peace" for South Sudan.

It is my strongest New Year's wish that peace is achieved in South Sudan

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this year. Japan supports the National Dialogue. Japan hopes that concrete steps are soon taken to ensure that “all the people of South Sudan have broadly participated, agreed, and accepted its agenda and outcomes” to make this National Dialogue successful, as H.E. the President rightly stated in his speech last month.

Peace improves the humanitarian situation as well as economy in this country. Peace brings so many displaced people back home. Peace allows JICA to strengthen its support to South Sudan.

I believe that sustainable peace can only be achieved by South Sudanese themselves, and your voices and actions from four corners of the country do matter. I guess that is why the theme of this National Unity Day was made “Sports for Peace & Unity”. I wish you to preach peace, with optimism, when you are back to respective cities.

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere hope that each and every one of you fully enjoy this sporting event safely without any injuries for a whole week and strengthen your confidence that you can build a peaceful and prosperous nation with all the athletes you met on this precious occasion. Japan will always be with you, standing by as a friend.

Thank you for your attention. Shukran Jazeelan.

(End)