

**Remarks by His Excellency Seiji OKADA, Ambassador of Japan to South Sudan
at the National Day Reception on the occasion of
the 84th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
at New Sudan Hotel, Juba, 5 December 2017**

Hon. Sophia Pal Gai, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

Thank you very much for taking your precious time to join us today to celebrate the 84th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

First of all, I would like to appreciate the continued efforts and commitment to the peace and security of this country by the government of the Republic of South Sudan and our international partners. The reason why I say this is because last year we couldn't celebrate our national day reception due to the tense situations in Juba. But today it is our honour to be able to invite all of you to this special occasion.

As I started to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan since November 1st, it is the first time for me to see most guests. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself briefly. My name is Seiji Okada. Before coming to Juba, I was working in Tokyo as Deputy Director-General for African Affairs Department and International Cooperation Development and as TICAD (Tokyo International Conference for African Development) Ambassador. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that I had opportunities to come to Juba twice under my capacity. In fact, the last time was in August when I was dispatched as a member of the delegation to assess and report the security situations in Juba.

(Assistance to the Republic of South Sudan through JICA)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regarding Japan's Development Cooperation to the Republic of South Sudan, JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) is taking a great lead. The centerpiece of JICA assistance is the construction of fundamental social and economic infrastructure such as Freedom Bridge, the Juba Water Supply and the Juba River Port, all of which

unfortunately have been suspended since July 2016. As Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan, I strongly feel the necessity and responsibility of bringing back JICA to Juba to resume and complete our suspended projects as soon as possible. For this purpose, we are now working very hard with the headquarter of the Foreign Ministry of Japan and JICA. To do so, I also would like to request the cooperation of South Sudan to achieve peace and security. Hence, now is the most critical time for us to resume our full-fledged support to South Sudan.

(Japan's Support to the Peace Process)

Peace is of paramount importance to everything. Without peace, nothing can be achieved including JICA's projects. Recently, we heard the tragic news that there have been engagements among armed groups in local cities and towns such as the incident in Jonglei. We would like to call for all armed groups including the fighters among communities to lay arms and need for peaceful solutions. We never disregard the value of peace, which Japan learnt as a lesson from the World War II.

Now, we would like to encourage and welcome some peace processes such as National Dialogue and High-Level Revitalization Forum that are on-going in this country. Japan stands for each peace process and, therefore, Japan has been supporting National Dialogue at the grass-roots level to make the conducive environment for National Dialogue and National Dialogue Steering Committee's initiative through UNDP. Also, while we understand that National Dialogue Steering Committee currently work on the grass-roots level national dialogue discussion, we would like to encourage them to have it transparent, inclusive and accountable. In addition, we recently decided to make a contribution to JMEC for the implementation of ARCSS (Agreement of the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan), while we are supporting CTSAMM.

(Development Cooperation through International Organizations)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Japan also continues wide-ranging support to the Republic of South Sudan in partnership with various international organizations. Nevertheless, our mission is not just funding projects submitted by our partners. Rather it is fundamental and essential for us to interact with the government of the Republic of South Sudan and local South Sudanese people to find their true assistance needs. Therefore, during the first month as Ambassador, I already visited two provincial areas, Yambio and Nimule. My next

destination is Aweil on the day after tomorrow together with UNDP for the recovery and stabilization project. This project supports South Sudanese so that they can obtain jobs to feed their families, which we consider critical activities to prevent violent extremism.

In Yambio Japan and UNDP inaugurated State Revenue Authority and launched construction and rehabilitation of Vocational Training Center. Our support to the institutional building should be coupled with the economic development through vocational training to the youth. Above all, I would like to express my strong support to the commitment to peace and security by Hon. Badagbu Daniel Rimbasa, Governor of Gbudue state.

Also, I had a chance to visit Nimule with UN Women and IOM for the handover of the rehabilitated market and the site visit to Nimule Border Crossing Point. In Nimule, we have witnessed the importance of appropriate border management to facilitate free movement of goods, people and service without jeopardizing safety and security. We are also moved by the motivation of women to improve their livelihood and are convinced of the critical importance of women to engage in the peace process - either at grass-roots, national or regional level.

These are just a few examples of our support, but Japan will continue supporting the Republic of South Sudan in partnership with various international and local organizations. With our support, we believe that success stories will be replicated in other parts of the country and bring peace throughout the whole nation eventually.

(Public Relations and Cultural Exchanges)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Japan-South Sudan relations will be further enhanced by cultural exchange programmes. Today a lot of returnees from Japan are present.

Since UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research) Hiroshima launched a fellowship programme for young government and civil society leaders, we sent around 70 young South Sudanese leaders to Hiroshima. Among them, I would like to commend Mr. Marial Luk Lueth Duany and Ms. Christina Pita Lukudu. After they joined a UNITAR Hiroshima fellowship programme as a fellow in 2015, they became a coach for the same programme in 2016, and from 2017 they started to work as UNITAR staff.

We also offered trainings for diplomats and teachers for 5 South Sudanese people. Besides, 19 South Sudanese are currently studying at Japanese universities under the auspices of ABE Initiative. Ms. Buwali Lilian John Billy, or let me call Lily-san. She visited Japan as a diplomatic trainee, and after returning to Juba, she is actively engaged with our Embassy, for instance, by serving as an interviewer for ABE initiative scholarship.

My hope is that returnees from Japan will not only keep a close relationship with Japan but actively engage with Japan and hand over knowledge you learnt from Japan to the future generations.

(Conclusion)

Let me conclude my remarks by thanking all of you again for supporting our mission. On behalf of the Japanese community in South Sudan, I greatly appreciate your cooperation. On our side, we will do our utmost to support the ownership of the South Sudanese people, promote our partnership with the international community and deliver on our commitment to peace and prosperity of South Sudan.

Thank you very much.

(End)