

**Remarks by Seiji Okada, Ambassador of Japan
to the Republic of South Sudan at the Opening Ceremony
for the Third National Unity Day
at Juba National Football Stadium**

Honorable Dr. Nadia Arop Dudi, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports,

Mr. David Shearer, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan,

Honorable Salah Rajab, Minister of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports of Jubek State, representing Governor of Jubek State,

Director Generals from the 12 regions across South Sudan,

Ms. Tomomi Uchikawa, Senior Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA),

Athletes from across the Republic of South Sudan,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an immense pleasure and privilege for me to be invited to the Opening Ceremony of National Unity Day sports event for peace and unity.

First of all, I would like to appreciate strong efforts and commitment by the South Sudanese government to prepare for this large-scale sports event in tandem with JICA and congratulate successfully launching the third sports event.

Also, on behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, AMS Clothing and Bollore Logistics for their financial support to the National Unity Day sports event.

As we call this sports event the National Unity Day, we aim to take this opportunity to consider and realize the significance of peace and unity at the grassroots level through sports.

In fact, commitment to peace and stability is of paramount importance to the development of this country. As you are aware, Japan's support to the National Unity Day sports event is through JICA.

Despite the difficulty in their operation since July 2016, JICA has been implementing their projects for South Sudan, including this National Unity Day sports event, from the Kampala office. With regard to the JICA landmark projects, such as the water supply system project and the construction of Freedom Bridge, it depends on the stability of this country whether the projects can be resumed.

As you may be aware, a JICA security assessment mission has come to Juba this week, and, as you witness, it is our great pleasure that we can celebrate the Opening Ceremony of the third National Unity Day sports event together with the JICA mission.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Sports has historically played a critical role as a means of bringing the youth together to embrace national identity. Sports has also promoted mutual understanding regardless of any differences and borders. In fact, Japan is now preparing for the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020 to invite athletes from around the world. You must be a part of them.

As I mentioned the importance of peace and unity for this country and the role of sports, I would like to express my expectation that every one of you fully respects the spirit of fair play and

sportsmanship. Also, I believe this sports event is an excellent occasion to communicate and interact with other teams from other local areas to deepen your mutual understanding.

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere hope that each one of you enjoys this sports 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 meet on this precious occasion. Japan will always be with you, standing by as a friend.

Thank you for your attention. Shukran Jazeelan.

(End)