

Speech by Ambassador of Japan to Malawi, Mr. Yasushi Naito at the Business Networking Cocktail Reception co-hosted by the Embassy of Japan and Social Innovators Forum Africa (SIFA) on 30th January 2026

Honorable Edgar Tembo, Deputy Minister of Industrialization, Business, Trade and Tourism,

Senior Government Officials,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Members of Japanese Private Sector,

Members of Malawian Private Sector,

Members of Academia,

Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

It is a profound honor and a great pleasure to welcome you to this Business Networking Cocktail Reception, which the Embassy of Japan is delighted to co-host with Colorbath this evening. Your presence truly makes this evening special, and I extend my sincere gratitude to each one of you for in fact joining us.

I am Naito Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi. This morning, I had the honor of presenting my Letters of Credence to His Excellency the President, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika. It is a great privilege for me that my very first public appearance and speech as Japan's Ambassador to Malawi is being delivered at this important occasion, one dedicated to advancing the economic partnership and mutual development of Japan and Malawi.

I arrived in this beautiful country just under three weeks ago. In this short period, I have been impressed by Malawi's wonderful climate, its breathtaking natural beauty, and, most importantly, the genuine warmth and gentle nature of its people. Every interaction has reaffirmed my belief in the strong bonds of friendship between our two nations. I am committed to dedicating my utmost efforts to further strengthening the long-standing friendship between Japan and Malawi, and to contributing actively to Malawi's sustainable development across various sectors. I eagerly look forward to collaborating closely with all of you in the promising years ahead.

As a matter of fact, in my conversation with His Excellency the President this morning, we discussed that business relations and promotion of trade and investment as a new priority area of collaboration and I precisely mentioned to His Excellency about this business event we have today with participation of many Japanese companies.

This evening's event is thoughtfully designed to foster robust ties and explore new avenues for collaboration between Japan and Malawi. This initiative aligns perfectly with Japan's broader engagement with Africa, as exemplified by the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). Last August, Japan hosted the Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, TICAD 9, in Yokohama, under the overarching theme of "Co-creating Innovative Solutions with Africa." Our aim was clear: to foster prosperity by strengthening public-private partnerships, leveraging Africa's rich resources and dynamic population, alongside Japan's cutting-edge technology and extensive expertise. The "Yokohama Declaration," adopted at TICAD 9, particularly emphasized accelerating specific initiatives to reinforce public-private collaboration between Japan and Africa, striving for innovative solutions to our shared global challenges. The conference saw extensive participation from African and Japanese companies, advancing investment and business partnerships through events such as the Public-Private Business Dialogue and the signing of 324 MoU's cooperation documents.

Furthermore, last year, from April to October, Japan hosted the World Expo 2025 Osaka Kansai, a global platform for sharing ideas on technological

innovation and solutions to pressing societal challenges, under the theme of "Designing Future Society for Our Lives." I am particularly delighted to hear that Malawian representative participated in this momentous event. It served as an excellent opportunity to introduce Malawi's potential and unique charm to a global audience, fostering greater understanding and interest.

I firmly believe there is still immense, untapped potential for Japanese corporate technologies, expertise, and innovative solutions to contribute to Malawi's economic development and problem-solving. Today, we are privileged to have a diverse array of Japanese companies gathered here.

Earlier today, we witnessed the successful culmination of the Social Innovators Forum Africa (SIFA), an initiative that began in 2024 as a corporate social responsibility project of a Japanese tech giant, NTT DOCOMO Business Engineering, and which we are proud to see holding its third edition this year. While Japanese companies are renowned for their meticulous due diligence and prudent approach, which may mean that investments take a thoughtful amount of time to materialize, their strength lies in their long-term commitment. Once they embark on a venture, they tend to establish deep roots, foster local talent through training and capacity building, cultivate supporting industries, and build sustainable, enduring businesses that contribute to the entire ecosystem.

The world is indeed entering a critical decade, facing interconnected challenges such as climate change, energy insecurity, and food system disruptions. Addressing these multidimensional development needs, from modernizing education and strengthening infrastructure to creating youth employment and building an innovation-driven economy, requires profound cross-border and cross-sector collaboration. Sustainable impact, as we understand, cannot be achieved through public development assistance alone; it must be driven by a dynamic combination of private-sector innovation, technological solutions, academic research, and local expertise. SIFA aims to be the very platform that facilitates this paradigm shift from competition to collaboration to co-creation, accelerating Malawi's transition toward sustainable and inclusive growth.

I sincerely hope that today's event will serve as a catalyst for all participants – Japanese and Malawian businesses, government officials, and members of the diplomatic corps alike – to discover valuable partners and forge meaningful, connections. Let us use this networking opportunity to exchange insights, explore synergies, and lay the groundwork for future collaborations that will bring prosperity to both Japan and Malawi. Although our time together is short, I hope you will thoroughly enjoy this evening and make the most of this invaluable opportunity.

Thank you very much for your attention.

End