

Remarks by NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi at the 9th Japanese Ambassador's Judo Championship on 21st March

- The Guest of Honor, Honourable Alfred Gangata M.P., Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture,
- Mr. Jameson Ndalama, Principal Secretary, Minister of Youth Sports and Culture,
- Mr. Justice Msopera, Director, Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture,
- Mrs. Alice Misomali and Mrs. Dora Mangulama, Board Members, Malawi National Council of Sports,
- Mrs. Ivy Chinangwa, Acting CEO, Malawi National Council of Sports,
- Major General Francis Kakhuta Banda, Vice President, Malawi Olympic Committee,
- Mr. Osbourne Banda, President of the Judo Association of Malawi,
- All Government Officials and all Judo officials present,
- Members of the media,
- All athletes and their families and friends,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

Mwaswera bwanji nonse?

It is my honor and pleasure to welcome you all to the 9th Japanese Ambassador's Judo Championship.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Judo Association of Malawi, under the leadership of Captain John Kaputa and Mr. Osbourne Banda, as well as all the judo athletes who have participated in the tournament today. Without your commitment, this championship would not have been such a success.

I wish to take this opportunity also to acknowledge a generous contribution by a Japanese NPO: the International Music Exchange Association for Children (AIMEC) who visited Lilongwe last month and donated 13 judo uniforms to the Judo Association through JICA

Malawi.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, you may recall that we started this Judo Championship in 2014 and have been hosting every year since then. After some disruption during the COVID pandemic and the aftermath, we managed to organize yet another championship. Indeed, I am especially excited, as this is also my first time attending this event.

Honourable Minister, you may agree with me that Judo is not just a martial art, but indeed a sport for peace. I once practiced Judo myself in junior high school up to Brown belt, and I know it is fun to master your own combination of “waza,” in my case “Sasae Tsurikomi Ashi” and “Taiotoshi,” I felt so good when I successfully throw my opponent with the combination I practiced repeatedly.

But I also learned about its underlying philosophy. Judo contributes not only to physical strength, but also to self-discipline and most importantly, respect for sensei, respect for others including one’s opponent. It is with these values for Judo, which, if well understood, will contribute to peace in the communities.

I am very aware that this 9th Japanese Ambassador’s Judo Championship serves as a platform for selection of Judo athletes to compete in international competitions, including Maputo Regional 5 Youth Games, Dakar Youth Olympic Games, Glasgow Commonwealth Games and African Union Qualifiers.

It is encouraging to note that African Judo is getting stronger and stronger. I recall when I was a young diplomat in South Africa, my colleague at the Embassy was a Judo master who used to train South African national team. I accompanied him as an interpreter but doing the same exercises of the national team and ended up doing “Randori” with lady’s national champion at heaviest class! I was thrown like a bag. So do not be mistaken, not every Japanese can play Judo like master despite his appearance.

It is my hope that, through this championship, more people will be encouraged to start

Judo, and ultimately the development will lead to youth empowerment, promotion of health and building a peaceful society with mutual understanding and spirit of friendship.

Honourable Minister, lastly, let me congratulate all the Judo athletes who have performed so well to receive medals, I saw your wonderful performance with such enthusiasm. Please keep it up. To those who could not receive medals, please don't be discouraged; continue working hard so that next time you can also be recognized.

Let me once again express my appreciation to the Judo Association of Malawi for promoting Judo in Malawi and always collaborating with the Embassy in organizing this championship. To all the Judo-ka, your families and friends, I deeply appreciate your support. Let the spirit of Judo prevail and let us together build up a peaceful and harmonious society where youths can cultivate and unleash their potential like cherry blossoms.

ありがとうございました(Arigato Gozaimashita)

Zikomo Kwambiri!

End