

Remarks by NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi at the Kendo Training & Cultural Exchange Program Seminar – Kamuzu Institute of Sports, Lilongwe on Saturday, 4th April 2026

- Ms Phiri, Regional Manager, Malawi National Council of Sports,
- Mr. NAGATA Yohei sensei, 7th Dan, Toyota Motor Corporation,
- Mr. Shadreck Kulemeka, representing CEO of CFAO Malawi,
- Mr. Austinie Somba, 4th Dan, President of the Kendo Association of Malawi,
- Members of the media,
- Family and friends of Kendo players,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

Mwadzuka bwanji nonse? – Good morning, everyone.

My name is NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi. It is my pleasure to be invited to participate in the Kendo Training and Cultural Exchange Program Seminar. I am here with my wife, Harumi, and my elder son, Yuwa, a Save the Children manager visiting from Uganda. My second son, who is in Nagoya, works for Toyota.

I wish to extend a special welcome to Nagata Sensei, who travelled all the way from Japan to give his guidance to Kendo practitioners in Malawi. Thank you for your long association with the Kendo Association of Malawi.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kendo is a modern Japanese martial art descended from kenjutsu, the samurai warriors' traditional swordsmanship exercises. Today, it is widely practiced in Japan and has spread to many other nations around the world.

In Japan in my childhood, Kendo is taught from 5th grade elementary school and is a compulsory training at police agency together with Judo. My understanding of Kendo is that it is a way of advancing oneself as human being through disciplined practice. It molds the mind and body and cultivating of healthy and strong spirit, learning of esteem courtesy and honor, advancing of self-improvement at all time while associating with others with faithfulness and integrity, and love your society and contribute to peace and prosperity of humanity.

I met Mr. Somba for the first time last month when he shared with me the story of his Kendo journey. In 1992, a JICA volunteer was doing “Suburi” Kendo practice during lunchtime near Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital. Austinie, then a 14-year-old boy, had the courage and curiosity to ask what he was doing and joined him in practicing Suburi under the guidance of Nakagawa Satoshi Sensei. That is the origin of Kendo in Malawi.

In 2009, Mr. Somba started his engagement with the Embassy of Japan in Malawi, which led to the first Japanese Ambassador’s Kendo Championship in 2014. Over the years, the Embassy of Japan in Malawi has supported seven Kendo Championships, along with championships in other martial arts such as Judo and Karate. We look forward to supporting more Ambassador’s Championships in the future.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the Government of Malawi and the Malawi National Council of Sports for their continued support towards Kendo and other sporting disciplines.

As I conclude, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Kendo Association of Malawi, under the leadership of Mr. Austinie SOMBA, as well as the entire Association.

I also wish to add my appreciation to all partners who made the 2026 Kendo Friendship Tour possible, including CFAO, Toyota Motor Corporation, as well as former Ambassador of Japan to Malawi, Mr. IWAKIRI Satoshi, and Nakagawa Satoshi Sensei for their contributions.

To the students, it was impressive to see you training, and congratulations on successfully completing the session under the guidance of Nagata Sensei.

This seminar is a great example of the significant strides the Association is taking to further promote the spirit of Kendo in Malawi.

Zikomi kwambiri

Arigato gozaimashita

Thank you very much for your attention

End