

Remarks by Mr NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi at the Final Reporting Session of the Returning JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteer in Balaka, 8 April 2026

Thank you very much for allowing me to attend today's final reporting session as a representative from the Embassy. Ms. Ayako Tokida was dispatched to the Balaka Teacher Development Centre for two years starting from April 2024, where she taught expressive art classes at primary schools within the *Balaka district. At today's final reporting session, I was deeply impressed by the numerous insights shared, as well as the episodes of trial and error and overcoming difficulties with the support of the Malawian teachers.

Ms. Tokida, a sincere and professional educator, shed tears alongside students who were unable to pass exams due to various circumstances, delving into the underlying social issues and earnestly pursuing solutions. With the cooperation of her fellow teachers, she devised various measures to further encourage the children's positive mindset. From the remarks made by the teachers today, I learned that her efforts and achievements were highly regarded and appreciated. The fact that Ms Tokida was given a local name "Chimwemwe Nong'oneza" (meaning "happiness") is clear evidence that she was truly loved by the community. As pointed out by the Director of Education, I hope that even after Ms. Tokida's departure, the teaching model she established will continue to have a lasting impact on the children.

Ms. Tokida mentioned her intention to make the most of what she learned in Balaka in her future career. I believe that in time she may come to realise that these two years were among the most valuable in her life. We will take her recommendations into consideration for future JICA projects.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the teachers who accepted and supported Ms. Tokida, the staff of the Balaka district, and all community members involved. Malawi has received the highest number of JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers dispatched worldwide, such as Ms. Tokida, and I am truly grateful that bonds between people have been built throughout Malawi. Thank you very much.

*Balaka is a town located about 200km south of the capital Lilongwe, along the Nakala Corridor.