

Remarks by Mr. NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi at the Sky Kids Academy Bricklaying Ceremony (11 June)

- ❖ Councillor Ekima Chikafa, Lilongwe City Council,
- ❖ Ms Leya Kamphika, Ministry of Education,
- ❖ Ms. Hawa Majola, Director of Sky Kids Academy and all staff,
- ❖ Mr. Timothy Dawa, President of Orphan Affairs Unit Malawi,
- ❖ Mr. Tetsuta Okada, Representative of Orphan Affairs Unit Japan,
- ❖ Ms. Mitsuko Tamura, Director of OAU Japan and the entire delegation,
- ❖ Mr. Yukinari TANAKA, JICA Chief Representative Malawi,
- ❖ Ms Harriet Boniface, Olympian judo player who represented Malawi in the Tokyo Olympic Game,
- ❖ TA Tsabango and all chiefs present,
- ❖ Community supporters and parents,
- ❖ Boys and girls, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mwadzuka bwanji nonse – Good morning.

Ine dzina langa ndi Yasushi NAITO, Kazembe wa dziko la Japan muno m'Malawi. – My name is Yasushi NAITO, Ambassador of Japan in Malawi.

Choyamba, Ine ndasangalala kukuwonani – I am very pleased to see you all.

It is great honor and pleasure for me, to be invited to be here to join you celebrating the signing of the construction contract for the new Sky Kids Academy school building.

I am deeply impressed by the unique and enriching curriculum offered at Sky Kids Academy, where students acquire not only academic knowledge but also essential life skills. I was amazed to see some learners introducing themselves in Japanese language, counting numbers, days of a week all in Japanese! I sincerely hope that the new school building, with the donation from friends from Japan, but

with strong ownership and contribution of the community itself will provide a safe, nurturing, and inspiring environment where students can learn, grow, and realize their full potential.

We firmly believe that education empowers children with their dreams and hope, safeguards their dignity, and equips themselves to build a brighter future for themselves and for their nation. In Malawi, there is a local proverb that says “**M’mera Mpoyamba**”, which emphasizes the importance of nurturing the growth and development of children.

Japan has also demonstrated commitment to advancing education in Malawi through various programs. For instance, Malawi is the country that has received the largest number of JICA Volunteers in the world, and this year marks the 55th year since we sent volunteers to Malawi. Including experts and volunteers combined, more than 4,700 Japanese professionals have been dispatched to Malawi thus far. Each one of them has worked sincerely alongside local communities in pursuit of economic development of this country.

Through their efforts, strong people-to-people ties have been built across Malawi, reaching even the most remote areas. I am glad to know that some of today’s cabinet ministers were also taught mathematics by Japanese volunteers in schooldays and now leading the country.

Even after their assignments as volunteers came to an end, some continue their engage with Malawi through activities of fair-trade business, NGOs, and other initiatives addressing social challenges. These countless bridge-builders, both Japanese and Malawians sustain personal connections between our two nations and represent most valuable assets driving Japan–Malawi bilateral relations.

I would like you to take a moment and look at the members of the team visiting today. Ms. Mitsuko Tamura, who once served as a nursery schoolteacher as a JICA Volunteer, has continued to nurture human connections with Malawi and support its people, with her strong resolve and leadership. I am deeply impressed with her passion and efforts of binding goodwill of supporters from Japan, and reading out each and every supporter’s name to be acknowledged.

Mr. Okada and Mr. Araishi are well known in Malawi as champions of the One Village One Product (OVOP) movement and have made significant contributions to the country’s industrial development.

Mitsuko’s sister, Ms. Noriko Tamura, a judoka, has been teaching children importance of respect and discipline through judo. We have just witnessed a

wonderful demonstration of uchikomi by Noriko and Harriet. Harriet is a top Malawian judo player who now coaches national team.

Ms. Komori has been sharing her skills in producing handicrafts using chitenje fabric. And PETOMO has been providing artistic training, demonstrating a magical ability to transform empty plastic bottles into beautiful works of art. All of them have come with a strong desire to work together with Sky Kids Academy.

I would like to commend their efforts, visiting Malawi all the way from Japan. They have come here out of a sincere wish to contribute to well-being of individuals and communities in Malawi, and to deepen the friendship.

I am convinced that the establishment and continued growth of Sky Kids Academy stand as a testament to the strong trust and partnership built through the dedication of Ms. Mitsuko Tamura and the OAU Japan team. We firmly believe that investing in the children who will shape Malawi's future, is the most reliable pathway to sustainable development.

When one asks Japanese people who have been involved with Malawi what they have learned from this country, many give a similar answer. They say that Malawi teaches us some of the most fundamental value in life: gratitude, the ability to remain positive and find happiness under any circumstances, and the power to bring happiness to others. Learning about sincerely caring for other human beings: “**Umuntu Ugumuntu Ngabanthu**” - I am because we are. We also learn “**Chifundo**” (Compassion); feeling and acting upon the suffering of others, “**Ulemu**”(Respect); honoring elders, peers, children, and strangers and “**Kulandira**” (Hospitality); welcoming visitors and sharing food, even when resources are scarce.

I would therefore like to express my sincere appreciation to Mitsuko and Mr. Okada for introducing Sky Kids Academy to us. As the Embassy of Japan, we highly value the friendship between Japan and Sky Kids Academy, and we will continue to support and strengthen this important relationship in the years ahead.

This achievement would not have been possible without the dedication and collaboration of all those gathered here today. I extend my sincere gratitude to Ms. Hawa Majola, Mr. Dawa Tymothy, and the entire Sky Kids Academy team. I also thank government officials, traditional leaders, parents, and community members whose unwavering support has made this milestone possible.

I am confident that this new school will serve as a beacon of knowledge, hope, and opportunity for generations to come. Japan remains committed to

strengthening our partnership in education for the benefit of Malawian children and the nation as a whole.

Once again, congratulations to everyone involved.

Thank you very much.

Zikomo kwambiri.

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