

Remarks by Mr NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi at the Bishop Mackenzie International School(15<sup>th</sup> June)

(Introduction)

I am delighted to be invited to the Bishop Mackenzie International School in Lilongwe today at the invitation of the Student Garden Club. It is a school with a great joyful atmosphere, as I joined the International Day in April, where each country from which students come was proudly represented, marching with family and community members.

I myself was also brought up abroad and spent four years in international schools, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in other parts of the world — Bangkok, Thailand, and Rome, Italy. So, I know how one's view of the world is shaped through mutual understanding and respect among friends from different cultural backgrounds. Had I not gained inspiration from international schools, I would never have thought of entering the Foreign Service and becoming an Ambassador of Japan.

As for the Bishop Mackenzie International School, the Embassy of Japan in Malawi does not forget that in on March 11 in 2011, when Japan was hit by a massive tsunami and earthquake, it was the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at Bishop Mackenzie who raised funds through a charity bazaar and donated to the victims of the tragedy in Japan. I wish to report to you that Miyagi and other prefectures affected are reconstructed thanks to your help.

Ambassador Fujio Samukawa, one of my predecessors, respectfully received the donation from students of 4<sup>th</sup> Grade. We appreciate your contribution. When our children and grandparents were suffering from disaster, it was students of Bishop Mackenzie who rendered hands of help. The school thus has a special bond with Japan.

(Japanese gardens)

I was happy to know there is this student led initiative to create Japanese Garden at Bishop Mackenzie. Japanese traditional gardens reflect Japan's sense of beauty and philosophical ideas. They are deeply influenced by Zen Buddhism as well as Shintoism. Japanese gardens avoid artificial ornamentation and instead highlight the natural landscape — water, rocks, cobblestones, seasonal reflections, and minimalism — while avoiding excessive decorations. The garden is often an expression of the universe, where one can enjoy calmness and meditation.

One style, Kare-san-sui, or dry gardens, use rocks, cobblestones, and sand to

represent water. Japanese gardens are also influenced by Shintoism, which teaches us to respect for ancestors and spirits, alongside a deep respect for nature. My wife Harumi does Ikebana, Japanese flower arrangements, can also share with you types of flowers suited for Japanese Gardens. Bonsai- “a tray garden# is also practiced in Malawi and we are happy to give advice.

I hope the students’ initiative on creating a Japanese Gardens will become a memorable milestone to each student as well as to the Bishop Mackenzie School to remember your special bonds with Japan.

End.