

Remarks by Mr. NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi, to the Embassy Staff at the 6-month mark since his arrival in Malawi (10th July)

We arrived in Lilongwe on 12th January this year, and it will be exactly six months on Sunday since our arrival in Malawi. During this period, you have supported us to settle in, briefed me on the history, culture, politics, and economy of Malawi. You taught us how to pronounce Chichewa phrases in my speeches, where to eat nshima, and how to entertain guests at the official residence.

Your support was so critical to my diplomatic activities as Ambassador. I sincerely thank you for your service.

Thanks to your support, I have met all the ministers and many important people in various fields. I was able to visit Blantyre, Mzuzu, Zomba, and remote villages in Mzimba, Chikwawa, and Phalombe. I was able to make 30 speeches, an average of one speech every week, and newspaper articles exceeded 40, with about 100 SNS posts.

This finger lunch today is our humble appreciation for your support during my, so to say, "probation period." After six months, one cannot say I am still new. I am supposed to be on my own, and I should be able to guide new diplomats.

My impression of this Embassy in Malawi is that you have a great cooperative atmosphere with very warm and friendly individuals.

I was back in Japan in May for the annual meeting with Ambassadors to Africa and realized that we are so fortunate. Many of our missions in Africa are dealing with conflicts, coups, serious crimes, even the evacuation of Japanese citizens or the suspension of ODA, all of which prevent them from having positive interactions. But here in Malawi, almost everything we do is positive.

Through our long, uninterrupted development cooperation, we have so many people, both Malawians and Japanese, who have a passion for bridging our two countries. We thus seek to be a "moderator" of goodwill so that JOCV volunteers, NGOs, and businesspersons from Japan can shine and enhance their involvement with Malawi to bridge our two nations.

We should interact with the Government and people of Malawi in a way that highlights their greatest characteristic and Africa's, the "Warm Heart of Africa," and draws out their strengths. The proposed Japan Day in September is one opportunity to involve people, make it fun, and broaden the circle of friendship. I will do my best to make the work of the Embassy rewarding.

Thank you again for your excellent service and support.

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