

Remarks by NAITO Yasushi Ambassador of Japan to Malawi
At Japan Malawi Business Networking Event (24th August)

- The Guest of Honour, Hon. Simon Itaye, Minister of Industrialisation, Business, Trade and Tourism,
- Hon. George Thapatula Chaponda, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation,
- Hon. Roza Fatch Mbilizi, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development,
- Mr. TANAKA Yukinari, JICA Malawi Chief Representative,
- Mr. MATOBA Shintaro, Executive Director, Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), Africa Region,
- Ms Daisy Kambalame, CEO of Malawi Confederation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry(MCCCI),
- Captains of Industries including CFAO, JTI, NICO Holdings, Paramount Holdings,
- Representatives of Japanese business delegation,
- Her Excellency Leigh Stubblefield, British High Commissioner,
- All International Organization and Government Officials,

●Members of the press, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening,

Thank you for joining us today for this JICA Study Tour Business Networking Event. I extend a warm welcome to such a diverse group of participants and hope this event will create new opportunities for collaboration, investment, and stronger economic ties.

This week, we host six representatives from Japanese companies visiting Lilongwe and Blantyre. They are JGC Group, Koken Boring Machines, Hagihara Industries, Nishizawa, Taiyo Bussan and Tokyo 8.

I wish to thank Mr Tanka of JICA Malawi for organizing this Tour for Japanese companies interested in doing business in the food and agricultural value chain field in Malawi. This is the second business mission since my appointment 7 months ago. In January, 17 companies from Japan participated Social Innovation Forum Africa (SIFA) that later led to signing of MoUs with Government department and local partner. I am glad that the organizer of SIFA, Mr Yusuke Yoshikawa is here with us today from Japan.

So, I am hoping that this mission will also lead to some tangible outcomes.

Honorable Ministers,

When I presented my letters of credence to His Excellency the President, Prof Arther Peter Mutharika, His Excellency requested me that it is high time the two countries should gear efforts to maximise business, investment and trade relations on top of development cooperation, which I fully agreed. Since then, business relations have become my priority task.

For that, I have four goals. **One** is to support macroeconomic stability in close collaboration with international community guided by IMF. We hope our effort will culminate to building private sector led growth in Malawi. Mr Koshima Yugo, the new Resident Representative of IMF Malawi who arrived earlier this month is here with us today. You must have read his interviewed article on today's newspaper.

The second goal is to of course, enhance business relations. In this connection, I welcome Mr Matoba Shintaro, the Executive Director of JETRO Africa Region who is here with us from Johannesburg. He is one of most powerful high-ranking officials responsible for Japan's investment and trade with Africa who will speak to us shortly. He is also secretary to the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in South Africa where more than 260 Japanese companies have their basis, creating at least 150,000 jobs and many of them are responsible for the whole Africa. So, Mr. Matoba, thank you for your interest in Malawi, and I am hoping to welcome another mission soon.

The third goal is to support the mining sector which the Japanese economy will also benefit from. We wish to make sure mining sector takes off by starting its full-scale production in a few years. Mutual benefit is one key pillar of Japan's policy on Africa. This afternoon Mr Matoba and I had an opportunity of visiting Hon Thoko Tembo, Minister of Mining and discussed Japan's assistance on capacity building and technical cooperations of the mining sector.

Fourthly, we will continue to strengthen our development cooperation including infrastructure, energy, education, agriculture, manufacturing and social sectors to make sure our cooperation will accelerate Malawi's effort for sustainable and inclusive development aligned to Malawi 2063.

Honorable Ministers, and precisely to our visiting Japanese companies,

One advantage in Malawi is human capital. People are warm, receptive, lower criminal risks, politically stable and notable size of professionals, both Malawians and Japanese who wish to bridge our two nations.

Number of dispatched volunteers in Malawi is the highest in the world. Honourable Rosa Mbilizi who kindly joined us tonight said to me that she was taught math in her school days by a JICA volunteer. Honourable Minister even sang "*Kyo no Hi wa Sayonara*," a classic popular Japanese song that goes, "Let us be friends always and forever", which must have been taught to students by the Japanese volunteer decades ago. We were so touched that we ended up singing together with Honourable Minister.

We are deeply humbled to know Honourable Minister do not forget the song and message taught by the Japanese volunteers for many years since her school days. Honourable Dr. Jean Mathanga, Minister of Energy is another minister who learned math from a JICA volunteer.

And we take it with humility that Hon. Geroje Chaponda, Minister of Foreign Affairs, embraces the special contribution by JICA volunteers and has been issuing certificate of appreciation to returning JICA volunteers co-signed with me. Returning volunteers after 2 years of serving local communities in Malawi often say they had life changing experience in Malawi which is not only beneficial to their careers, but it goes beyond that, it almost serves as compass to rest of their lives.

Many have special attachment to Malawi and continue to interact with their friends here. One of many examples is Mr Shimizu Ryosuke, former JICA volunteer who came back and made an investment to set up his company “Design and Printing PLUS Limited” here in Lilongwe. Mr Shimizu, kindly stand up please.

Similarly, more than 3000 Malawians studied in Japan through JICA training or MEXT scholarships, this is also more than many other countries. Tokyo 8 is run by scholarship alumni. Many government officials including principal secretary and even presidential advisor, Mr. Donbell Mandala, CEO of NICO General Insurance who is here with us today are also Japan alumni. The fact that a number of professional Malawians have studied in Japan is clearly an advantage of doing business in Malawi.

Distinguished Guests, Japan and Malawi have built a long-standing partnership through development cooperation, including in agriculture. Drawing on Japan's own experience market oriented horticultural farming MA-SHEP, we have supported rice production through irrigation, technical assistance, and capacity building. We have also promoted agricultural marketing, supported value addition through the One Village One Product (OVOP) initiative, and launch a Kaizen Project to improve productivity and quality management for agro-processing enterprises and SMEs.

These efforts are investments in Malawi's future competitiveness and sustainable growth, while creating new opportunities for Japanese businesses.

At present, several Japanese companies are already contributing to Malawi's economy, 10-15% of forex earning is by JTI only. JTI continues to make a significant contribution through tobacco exports. ETG, supported by investment from Mitsui & Co., is expanding its business in Malawi. Itochu Corporation promotes sesame exports, and CFAO/Toyota continues to expand its operations.

Likewise, tea grown here in Malawi is already enjoyed by many people in Japan through “Tullys Japan”, one of Japan's leading coffee shop chains. This serves as a reminder that the economic ties between our two countries are already stronger than many people may think. We wish to emulate Her Excellency Leigh Stubblefield, British High Commissioner and seek to set up Japan-Malawi Chamber of Commerce and Industry when the time is appropriate and will collaborate with MCCCCI and Malawi-UK Chamber of Commerce.

Malawi is an important partner. The Embassy of Japan continues to support Japanese companies while serving as a bridge between Japan and Malawi.

I sincerely hope that today's networking event is useful for meaningful discussions, new ideas, and forging business partnerships.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Hon. Ministers present, companies who hosted the site visit and everyone who has worked to organize this study tour and today's event.

Thank you for your attention.

End.