Remarks by NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi at the Launch of UNICEF Vaccination Campaign at Salima District (22nd Sept)

● Hon. Charles Chilambula, Deputy Minster of Health and Sanitation,

●Dr. Penny Campbell, UNICEF Malawi Representative,

●Ms. Thikozile Munthali, District Comissioner of Salima;

●Dr. Mike Chisema, EPI Programme Manager,;

●All the chiefs present;

●Health workers and volunteers;

●Parents and caregivers;

●Distinguished guests;

●Ladies and gentlemen:

**Muli bwanji nonse?**

It is a great honour to be with you here in Salima today for this important vaccination campaign. Salima District, with its beautiful lake shore and rich tourism potential, holds a special place. While its proximity to Lake Malawi is a blessing in many ways, it also makes the district vulnerable to water-related natural disasters, which can increase the risk of spreading infectious diseases. When it rains, it is often flooded and the village becomes hard reach area. Therefore, initiatives such as this vaccination campaign are of paramount importance.

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I would like to express our friendship and solidarity with the people of Malawi. I also thank everyone who has worked hard to make this vaccination campaign possible, especially the Government of Malawi, UNICEF, health workers, community volunteers, traditional leaders, faith leaders, and all community members gathered here.

We have come together for one very important reason – to protect our children.

Every child deserves the opportunity to grow up healthy, strong, and protected from diseases that can be prevented through vaccination. No parent should have to endure the tragedy of losing a child to an illness that we already have the means to prevent. This campaign is about ensuring that every child, especially the most vulnerable children under the age of five, in every village and every community, receives the protection they need.

We are proud to support UNICEF and the Government of Malawi in this important effort, made possible through the Supplementary Budget of the Government of Japan. We anticipate that, thousands of children in Salima and Thyolo will receive measles-rubella vaccines. Children will also be screened for malnutrition. Those in need of treatment, will be referred for appropriate care and support. Furthermore, improvements in water and sanitation services will help keep families healthy and reduce the spread of infectious disease.

I would like to share three important principles that guide Japan's

support;

Firstly, everyone should have access to health services. No one should be left behind because of where they live or because they cannot afford to.

Secondly, people are at the centre of development. Protecting children's health is one of the best investments we can make for the future of nation.

Thirdly, progress is achieved through partnership. Governments, development partners, international organizations, health workers, community leaders, faith leaders, parents, and young people all have an important role to play.

To all parents and caregivers, thank you for bringing your children for vaccination. By vaccinating your child, you are protecting not only your own family but also your entire community. To community leaders, and faith leaders, your support is invaluable. Your voices encourage families to seek health services and help counter misinformation.

Let me repeat a simple message: Vaccines are safe. Vaccines are free. Vaccines save lives.

In closing, let this campaign be remembered for the lives it saves and the healthier future it creates for children and families. Together, we can ensure that every child in Salima grows up healthy, protected, and able to achieve their full potential.

**Zikomo kwambiri.**

Thank you for your attention.

End