Speech by NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi at the Japan Day 2026 at Woodlands Farmers Market (26 September)

- Our Guest of Honour, Honourable Dr. Feston Kaupa M.P, Minister of Defence,
- H.E. Ambassador Chimango Chirwa, Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs,
- Mr. Gift Chancy Dulla, Principal Secretary for Defense,
- Senior Government Officials present here,
- Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Heads of Diplomatic Missions and International Organizations,
- Fellow Japanese Citizens in Malawi,
- Friends from the Private Sector,
- Friends from the Media,
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mwadzuka bwanji nonse?

I wish to extend my warm welcome to everyone gathered here to Japan Day, our annual "Matsuri" or Festival of Japanese culture. I am Naito Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan to Malawi. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for sparing your precious Saturday morning to join us today.

Japan is an island nation made up of four main islands in the Pacific Ocean, woven together by centuries of traditions, culture and history that have shaped its identity. When you see the sun rising from the flaming water of the Lake Malawi, that is the direction where Japan is, the land of the Rising Sun.

It is known for its advanced technology and leading automotive sector. We are humbled to see 48 percent of the cars on the streets of Malawi are Toyota made and today we are excited to see the 9th generation Hi Lux released in Malawi just this month displayed by

the stage.

If you are interested in Japan, this is the day for you. You can enjoy and appreciate different aspects of Japan, from traditional and pop-culture, to martial arts and Japanese food demonstration, all gathered here today. We are fortunate to have practitioners of Japanese culture in Lilongwe who are sharing their amazing skills honed throughout the year. We have something for every member of family to enjoy.

This year's Japan Day is also special for another reason. Of the four Japan Days that the Embassy has organised, this is the first one to be held outside the Embassy premises. As we wanted to bring Japan Day closer to the people of Malawi, and we are excited to hold Japan Day at this special and wonderful atmosphere of Woodlands Farmers Market.

(Malawi Police Band)

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Malawi Police Band for that wonderful performance we have just had, of three popular Japanese songs: *Furusato*, *Sakura* and *Sukiyaki Song*, they are all special songs very close to our heart, so nostalgic that they make us cry, especially for expats like us living away from home. Thank you for choosing and playing them for Japan Day.

The friendship between Japan and the Malawi Police Service including extends people to people exchanges through music. The Government of Japan has previously supported the Malawi Police Band through the provision of musical instruments under Cultural Grant Aid and again this year through a Japanese non-profit organization, AIMEC.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to the Malawi Police Service for its dedication and commitment to maintaining peace, law and order, and to protecting the safety and security of people in Malawi, including foreign nationals residing in the country. With a sense of humility, we wish to commend you for your important work and express our appreciation for your continued service.

I wish to salute Deputy-Inspector General, Dr. Noel Kayira, who was injured while bravely leading the successful rescue mission, and we sincerely wish him a speedy recovery.

Honourable Minister, allow me also to express our appreciation to the Malawi Defence

Force for its important role in maintaining peace and stability in Malawi, as well as promoting tolerance and security. Furthermore, we appreciate the Malawi Defence Force's active contribution to peacekeeping operations in Africa. The prevalence of peace in Malawi is a treasure and proud asset of the nation.

(Bond of friendship)

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen

During our 62 years of diplomatic relations, Japan and Malawi have built a friendship based on mutual trust and cooperation. The bonds of friendship have been further consolidated strong bonds of friendship including through 1,983 JICA overseas volunteers that have been dispatched to Malawi. I am also happy to mention that Malawi is the world's largest recipient of JICA volunteers.

Furthermore, the bonds of friendship have further been enhanced by many Malawians studying in Japan. Over 130 Japanese Government MEXT scholarship scholars; some 200 trainees of various mining related programs under JOGMEC (the Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security); and the more than 3000 JICA trainees. The passion and positive power of both the Malawians and Japanese who bridge our nations have been the driving force of the bilateral relations between Japan and Malawi.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize and appreciate the presence of JICA and JICA volunteers here today. They are also part of the team that helped make Japan Day possible and you will have an opportunity to meet and interact with them at some of the booths. They are all friendly and willing to share aspects of Japan you want to find out about. So, please do talk to them. Later in the day, they will showcase their dancing skills through the performance of traditional "*Soran bushi*" dances.

(Japanese Nationals and Companies)

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great joy to see some Japanese who have made Malawi their second home and who are here with us today to celebrate Japan Day. Their presence is a testament to the warm and welcoming environment that Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa, offers. Some of these Japanese nationals have established businesses and NGOs in Malawi and are exhibiting here today, so I encourage you to stop and learn more about their work.

In addition, we are pleased to have Japanese companies operating in Malawi joining us

today and showcasing their work and services. Their presence reflects the growing engagement between Japan and Malawi not only at the government level, but also through business and private-sector partnerships. We have received three Japanese business missions just this months and they wish to continue engaging with Malawi.

(Japan Day)

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I encourage you all to stay with us until the end of our cultural celebrations, as we have a variety of activities and performances to showcase.

Later on, my team will give a live demonstration of Japanese Tea Ceremony. This is the art of preparing and serving tea, carried out with great care and attention to detail, using the famous *matcha*, which has become a global phenomenon. Have any of you tried matcha before? Perhaps matcha ice cream? It's really a tasty treat.

The stage will also be busy with different performances and demonstrations, including two popular Japanese martial arts: Karate and Kendo. Additionally, our resident award-winning chef, Chef Ofuji, will give a live demonstration of making sushi rolls, a popular Japanese family food, and there will be much more to enjoy throughout the day.

And one of the highlights of Japan Day, out of so many, will be *Bon Odori*, a traditional Japanese communal dance in summer festivals enjoyed throughout Japan. This is an opportunity for everyone to join in, dance together and experience this loved Japanese tradition. I will lead *Bon Odori* myself, hoping to see the circle of friendship get bigger. So, make sure to join us in the dance. It is fun!

(Conclusion)

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding my remarks, I wish to once again thank you all for your kind presence here today. I look forward to interacting with you throughout the day as we enjoy fun aspects of Japanese culture, traditions and cuisine together.

I would also like to extend a special thank you to all the volunteers from the JICA Malawi Office, JICA volunteers, and the student volunteers from Bishop Mackenzie International School for their support in making this event possible.

Thank you very much for your attention, let us all enjoy Japan Day!

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