Remarks by NAITO Yasushi, Ambassador of Japan at the Unveiling Ceremony of Two Fire Engines donated by Japan Firefighters Association (13th Nov)

Hon. Dr. Ben Malunga Phiri M.P., Minister of Local Government and Rural Development
Mr. Dingiswayo Jere, Principal Secretary for Rural and Infrastructure Development
Mr. Clement Stambuli, Chief Executive Officer, Lilongwe City Council
Representatives of the Government of Malawi
Esteemed Fire brigade team
Distinguished Guests
Members of the media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Mwadzuka bwanji nonse/Good morning.

It is a great honour and privilege to represent the Japan Firefighters Association, Komae City in Tokyo, and Ageo City in Saitama Prefecture, all of whom have made significant contributions towards making the donation of these two fire engines possible in collaboration with Lilongwe City Council and the Embassy of Malawi in Tokyo,

I am particularly pleased that these fire engines will further strengthen Lilongwe City's capacity to respond to emergencies and protect the lives and property of its residents.

To date, the Japan Firefighters Association has donated a total of 20 fire engines to Malawi. Today's donation of two fire engines is part of their continued contribution to strengthening firefighting capacity in this country.

Japan is a disaster prone country, which is often hit by earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons and fire fighters are always at the core of rescue operations. The Japanese fire fighters practice the 300 years old tradition of “Hikeshi” (expertise) to fight against frequent fires as Japanese houses are made with wood and paper. Japanese fire fighters are dedicated professionals of honour, who actively train daily to save the lives of people and I am happy that their desire to help has reached out to Malawi, 12,000km away from Japan.

These two vehicles were originally donated by the following local governments in Japan:

- The first fire engine was provided by Komae City, Tokyo, through the Komae City Volunteer Fire Brigade, under Mayor Toshio Matsubara.
- The second was provided by Ageo City, Saitama Prefecture, through the Ageo City Fire Department, under Mayor Minoru Hatakeyama.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Japan Firefighters Association, the two municipalities, the Embassy of Malawi in Tokyo, and all those involved in making this donation possible.

I would also like to commend Lilongwe City Council for its efforts in securing the necessary resources for transportation and importation. This cooperation demonstrates that successful development partnerships require commitment and ownership from both sides.

Distinguished Guests,

Japan and Malawi have a longstanding partnership in supporting the development of Lilongwe. Over the years, Japan has made cooperation in a wide range of areas, particularly in road and energy infrastructure. These include the construction of Lilongwe Bridge, where Hon Minister, the Mayor and I, led the cleaning campaign and the bridge was handed over in February; the rehabilitation of the Old Town and Kanengo power substations; as well as grant assistance to provide Road Rehabilitation Equipment, which we signed earlier this month.

In addition, through various cooperation schemes, Japan has provided Malawi with special-purpose vehicles, including ambulances and waste collection trucks, in a total of 27 vehicles over the years to Malawi, which are helping to improve public services and benefit local communities.

We highly value our partnership with Lilongwe City Council and believe that strengthening local government capacity and infrastructure is essential for building a safe, resilient and sustainable city.

As cities continue to grow, effective emergency services become increasingly

important. I sincerely hope that these two fire engines will help Lilongwe City Council respond more effectively to fire emergencies and provide greater protection to its residents.

Japan remains committed to working with Malawi and its local authorities to address development challenges and deliver tangible benefits to the people.

Once again, I would like to thank all those who contributed to making this donation a reality. May these fire engines serve as another lasting symbol of the friendship and practical cooperation between Japan and Malawi.

With these remarks, it is my great pleasure to officially unveil the two fire engines to Lilongwe City Council through Hon. Dr. Ben Phiri, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development.

Zikomo kwambiri. Thank you for your attention!

End