

**Speech by the Ambassador of Japan, H. E. Mr. Kozo Takeda  
On the Occasion of the Embassy of Japan's National Day Reception Celebrating  
the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Akihito**

22 November 2018

Hon. Dr. Unity Dow, Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation  
H.E. Fetus G. Mogae, Former President of the Republic of Botswana and Mrs. Mogae  
Other dignitaries (Protocol observed)

Good evening.

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you all today. I would like to express my deepest appreciation for your participation at today's reception as we celebrate the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan who turns 85 years old this year.

This year's birthday reception is a special one as it will be the last birthday reception that will be held under the throne of His Majesty Emperor Akihito. His Majesty's abdication will take place on the 30th of April, 2019, meaning the end of the Heisei period which started in 1989 when Emperor Akihito's imperial reign began, following the death of his father.

On the 1st of May next year, His Majesty's first son His Imperial Highness, Crown Prince Naruhito will be enthroned and a new era will begin.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The bilateral ties between Botswana and Japan are close and continue to grow in every aspect. During my first year in Botswana, I witnessed a number of significant developments between our two countries.

January this year marked the 10th anniversary of the resident Embassy of Japan in Botswana, after years of being covered through the Embassy of Japan in South Africa.

In April, Mr. Yoshitaka Shindo, a Member of the House of Representatives and the former Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, visited Botswana as the

special envoy of the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe. During his visit, he held bilateral talks with His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, the President of the Republic of Botswana.

It is a great pleasure for me to mention that today's Guest of Honour, Hon. Dr. Unity Dow, Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation, visited Japan for the first time last month to officially attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting that was held in Tokyo. She held bilateral talks with Hon. Taro Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, on the sidelines of the TICAD Ministerial Meeting and exchanged views on issues of common interest.

This year, the Embassy held several handing over ceremonies for the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project, so-called GGP, which is a grant aid scheme administered by the Embassy of Japan. I also signed off three new GGP projects for this fiscal year.

I am pleased by the keen interest that Japanese schools have shown in Botswana, and to see many Japanese students visiting the country. This year alone, Akita University, Hokkaido University, Chukyo University and Ritsumeikan Keisho High School paid visits to Botswana for their educational or sport programs.

The annual Ben-Thema Primary school's painting exchange programme with Chigasaki Primary School in Yokohama marked its 5th anniversary this year.

And in August, the Botswana women's national softball team travelled to Japan and participated in the Women's Softball World Championships.

I am pleased to note that through our many shared events, the relationship between Japan and Botswana is getting stronger, and it is my wish that in 2019 the relationship will continue to flourish.

TICAD 7, the 7th summit of the TICAD process, will be held in August, 2019, in Yokohama, Japan. During this occasion, the Government of Japan would be most pleased to welcome the Botswana delegation to Japan.

Japan has continued to promote African development under the dual principles of

African “ownership” and international “partnership” since the launch of TICAD in 1993. As we approach TICAD 7, Japan would like to reinforce its efforts for human resource development and the promotion of private investment. We are fully aware of the importance of human resource development especially for the youth, which is one of the foundations for the diversification of the economy and is highly relevant to Botswana.

Japan has in fact committed itself to support Botswana’s efforts to transform its resource based-economy to a knowledge-based economy through various educational programmes. As part of TICAD, Japan launched the ABE Initiative, which stands for African Business Education Initiative for Youth, under which Japan promised to provide 1000 African nationals with master’s degree programs from Japanese Universities, followed by internship trainings at Japanese companies. The initiative has been successfully implemented and so far 10 Botswana have benefited from it. The Japanese government also offers a government scholarship programme and other opportunities to study or participate in training courses in Japan.

Our efforts are not restricted to Botswana. The Embassy is keen on maintaining and developing the existing cooperation with the SADC Secretariat and continuing the support for capacity building in SADC countries through technical cooperation in various areas such as the mining sector or the management of forest resources.

Regarding the promotion of private investments, the Japan-Africa Public-Private Economic Forum which was launched during TICAD VI was held in Johannesburg in May this year. Approximately 2000 people, including 100 Japanese companies participated in the forum. We will continue to invest in the future of Africa under public-private partnerships and it is my hope that business people in Botswana, as well as other SADC countries, will make use of the opportunities which have resulted from our efforts.

Allow me to take this opportunity to mention some other major events that Japan will host next year besides TICAD 7. In March, Japan will host the 5th World Assembly for Women. In June, the G20 Summit will be held in Osaka. And for those that love Rugby, it is a well-known fact that Japan will host the Rugby World Cup from September to November, making this a first for the Asian continent. And finally in October, the Ceremony of the Enthronement of his Majesty the Emperor will take place.

With all the events happening next year, I believe that we will be able to share abundant news, from the Far East, with you throughout the year.

Before I conclude my speech, I would like to mention one important thing. Japan was plagued with a series of natural disasters this year, including heavy rains, typhoons, and earthquakes. We sincerely appreciate the warm support extended from all of you. The affected areas in the Western part of Japan, Kansai and Hokkaido have all recovered at an incredible pace, through the effort and solidarity of the people. They are now ready to welcome tourists from around the world and we would be grateful if you would choose Japan, especially these provincial areas, as your next destination.

Now I would like to conclude my address by reiterating that Botswana and Japan share the same fundamental values such as democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights which we have jointly promoted in the international sphere since the two nations established diplomatic ties over 50 years ago. Botswana is a valued partner of Japan, and I will make every effort towards the further enhancement of our bilateral relationship.

Therefore, I would like you all to raise our glasses and join me in toasting our bright future.

To the health of His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, the President of the Republic of Botswana, and to the peace and prosperity of all the citizens of Botswana and our countries' fruitful cooperation.

Ke a leboga. Le Kamoso Batswana Betsho.

Pula!