

Speech by the Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr. TAKEDA Kozo
On the Occasion of the Celebration of the Birthday of His Majesty, Emperor Naruhito

27 February 2020

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you all this evening. 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 60 years old this year.

This celebration is considered a special one as it will be the first birthday His Majesty Naruhito will celebrate following his enthronement on the 1st of May, 2019.

At the time of His Majesty's enthronement, he became the 126th Emperor of Japan. During this time, Japan entered a new era called "Reiwa" meaning "beautiful harmony". His Majesty's enthronement ceremony took place on the 22nd of October, 2019 and was attended by representatives from 191 countries, regions and international organizations around the world. Botswana was represented by His Excellency Nkoloi Nkoloi, the Ambassador of Botswana to Japan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last year, apart from His Majesty's enthronement, we witnessed two major developments both in Japan and in Botswana. Japan hosted the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7) in August in Yokohama, which was attended by the Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation, Hon. Dr. Unity Dow, the then Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry, Hon. Bogolo Kenewendo and a number of private companies from Botswana. During that time, we held active discussions on the importance of economic diversification and transformation with a focus on the role of the private sector for Africa's development. For many of the participants, it was a promising start for new collaborations with the Japanese private sector and I believe our two countries have now entered a new stage in our relations.

The other major event was the General Elections held by Botswana in October 2019. Many countries and organizations were invited to observe the Elections, and they concluded that the elections were well organized and conducted in a free and peaceful atmosphere. As the Prime Minister of Japan, ABE Shinzo extended his congratulations to His Excellency Dr.

Mokgweetsi Masisi on his reappointment as President of the Republic of Botswana, the Prime Minister stated that during the elections, Botswana demonstrated their civic duties in a peaceful and democratic manner, showing their high hopes and confidence in His Excellency. I believe one of the priorities for President Masisi's government is to transform the Botswana economy from the high reliance on natural resources into a knowledge-based economy. Japan is committed to working in partnership with Botswana towards this goal, particularly sharing the technology and experience of the Japanese private sector.

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 and the management of forest resources.

This year, Japan has the honour to host the largest sporting events on earth – the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games. We look forward to the excitement in Japan, and the world over, as you will be entertained by the world's best in sport. The main stadium to be used for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies during the Olympics, was revamped and all additions made were completed last year.

I pray for the success of Botswana athletes during the Tokyo games, and wish that many of you will take this opportunity to visit Japan. We are ready to welcome and invite you to experience our culture and hospitality.

The Government of Japan endeavours to do its utmost to ensure the health and safety of all our guests who will visit Japan during the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and has thus taken comprehensive measures to deal with COVID-19. Japan has been in constant contact with the World Health Organization (WHO) and stands in solidarity with all other affected countries and areas. We need to continue joining forces, world over, to tackle this global public health threat.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude my address by reiterating that Botswana and Japan share the same fundamental values which include democracy, rule of law and respect for 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 your 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!