

Press Release

Embassy of Japan in South Africa

29th April, 2020

2020 Spring Conferment of Decoration from Japan

Abdullah Ibrahim

On 29<sup>th</sup> April 2020, the Government of Japan announced the foreign recipients of the 2020 Spring Imperial Decoration. Abdullah Ibrahim is among the recipients of the decoration by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

The world famous master of Jazz piano, the most successful and respected musician in South Africa and a great son of Cape Town, Abdullah Ibrahim will receive the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays in recognition of his lifetime achievement in emancipating the people of South Africa and the world through his piano, as well as his contribution to Japan-South African friendship through his works, performances and profound understanding of Japanese culture and spirituality.

Abdullah Ibrahim, who also previously received South Africa's highest National Order of Ikhamanga in 2009 as well as numerous international awards, started his career at the age of 15 for over 70 years. Throughout his music activities in the USA, Europe and in South Africa, Abdullah Ibrahim consistently fought strongly against racism and injustices. His composition, "Mannenberg" was loved and regarded as an informal national anthem of the people of South Africa in the difficult days.

Abdullah Ibrahim has a deep understanding of Japanese culture and spirituality through his long-time engagement with *Budo*. Abdullah Ibrahim has been conferred full mastership from the grandmaster Yukio Tonegawa of the *Bujutsu Kodosoku-Kai Yakami-ryu Taijutsu*. Abdullah Ibrahim who used to have his own *dojo* in Cape Town is the first non-Japanese master of *Yakami-Ryu*. Abdullah Ibrahim has performed in many concerts in Japan including the ones at the UNESCO World Heritage Site, *Kamigamo Shrine* in Kyoto (2003, 2006, 2010, 2015 and 2019). Furthermore, in Cape Town, in bridging heritage and spirituality of Japan and Africa, Abdullah Ibrahim performed in celebration of the centenary of the Japanese Consulate in Cape Town, the oldest Japanese mission in Africa, on the Heritage Day of 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018, which was reported widely by NHK(Japan Broadcasting Cooperation) to the people of Japan.

His beliefs on unity in human mind, body and nature culminate into the concept of “Satoyama” that signifies a sustainable coexistence of human beings with the nature. It also relates to the sentiment of awe and respect toward nature in African tradition. The deep insights by this wise man of Africa resonate with many people in Japan and have contributed to a mutual understanding between the people of Japan and the people of South Africa over the years. The most recent performance of Abdullah Ibrahim in Japan was in September 2019, during the Rugby World Cup.

Dates and arrangement of the conferment ceremony will be decided in due course.

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