

National Day Reception Remarks

December 7, 2010

HE Mr. Mthethwa, the Minister of Police,
HE Mr. Oliphant, the Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources,
His Majesty King Leruo Molotlegi, the King of the Royal Bafokeng Nation,
Their Royal Highnesses Prince Dlamini and Princess Mandela-Dlamini,
Their Royal Highnesses Princess Ntandoyesizwe and Princess Nokhosi,
(daughters of King Goodwill Zwelithini, King of the Zulu Nation)
His Grace Bishop Dr. Barnabas Legkanyane, (Bishop of the Zion Christian Church),
Friends from the ANC, DA, UDM, AZAPO and others in Parliament,
HE Ambassador and Dr. Ben Ngubane, former Ambassador to Japan and
Chairperson of the SABC Board,
HE Ambassador Alzubedi, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, and fellow
colleagues,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for coming to our National Day reception to celebrate the 77th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. This reception also marks the closing of the Japan-South Africa Centennial Celebrations that began on December 1st of last year in Cape Town. On that day, a plaque was unveiled at the sidewalk of Short-market Street in Cape Town marking the original office of the Honorary Consul of Japan, Mr. Julius Otto Jeppe. He was appointed as the first representative of the government of Japan on the continent of Africa in April 1910.

In the past year, the Embassy of Japan and the Embassy of South Africa in Tokyo have been organizing many cultural events to promote mutual understanding between our peoples. Here in South Africa, we have put on two Japanese film festivals, a number of Ikebana exhibitions and Japanese martial arts demonstrations, a traditional Japanese tea ceremony at the Oppenheims' Japanese tea garden at Brenthurst, a collaborative classic concert with a Japanese conductor and pianist together with the

Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, a jazz shamisen and piano recital, Japanese champion drummers with Awa-odori dancers and many, many more. On the more serious side, we joined the University of Pretoria and GIBS to co-host a symposium to articulate the future of our cooperation in 'the next 100 years'. This symposium was the launch event of the Centre for Japanese Studies at GIBS, a centre that becomes operational in a few weeks.

Looking at the official side of our relations, one highlight is the visit by Foreign Minister Okada in late April. He and DIRCO Minister Nkoana-Mashabane agreed to upgrade our bilateral partnership to one of 'strategic cooperative partnership'. Today, our cooperation is widening and deepening. On the parliamentary side, we have exchanged parliamentary delegations to learn from each other's experiences. The other day, I felt immense joy and honour when Speaker Max Sisulu personally handed to me a copy of the resolution adopted unanimously by the National Parliament acknowledging the Centennial Celebrations and expressing gratitude to the government of Japan for 100 years of excellent friendship. Well, we want to thank you!

On the business side, we are witnessing a resurging interest in Africa from Japanese business. Our Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs led a large delegation of businessmen to South Africa, Namibia and Angola. You have seen the acquisition of Dimension Data by the telecommunications giant NTT. Overall, Japanese businesses are interested in cooperating with, and participating in, your very much needed infrastructure build up for power generation and transmission, and also for transportation.

The past year was a very busy, and productive year. As we reflect on the past year, I think that for many of you, the first thing that comes to mind is the FIFA world cup. Congratulations to South Africa. Personally, I have never seen so many soccer matches in my life. It was really interesting to watch all South Africans rooting for Bafana Bafana against France. For me, the most memorable match was Japan versus Denmark at the Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Rustenburg. HIH Princess Takamado came to South Africa to give strength to the Samurai Blue, and the team responded with vigor. The Princess was so happy that night, and so charming when she paid

a courtesy call on Vice President Motlante the next morning. Her visit to South Africa was the first visit ever by a member of the Imperial Family of Japan. We hope there will be more.

In April, President Jacob Zuma conferred the Companion of OR Tambo decoration on Ms. Sadako Ogata, the President of JICA, and former UNHCR, for her contributions in representing the UN during the CODESA talks. In June, the Government of Japan conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, on Ms. Dannie Crafford for her contributions to promoting the Japanese art of flower arrangement, Ikebana. In November, the Emperor of Japan, at His palace, conferred the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun on Dr. Ben Ngubane, the former Ambassador of South Africa to Japan, for his contributions in promoting bilateral cooperation, especially in the field of science and technology. Today, there are more than two dozen joint research projects ongoing under the science and technology cooperation agreement that you helped to realize. Once again, congratulations Ben!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I now invite you to raise your glasses and join me in toasting to the health and continued well-being of President Zuma, and to the prosperity of the people of South Africa, and also to the 'next one hundred years' of the the strategic cooperative partnership between Japan and South Africa.

Thank you.