

Address by H. E. MR. YUTAKA YOSHIZAWA, Ambassador of Japan,

on the occasion of Reception to observe the passing of one year since the Great East Japan Earthquake

His Excellency Mr Ebrahim Ebrahim, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation,

His Majesty the King Leruo Molotlegi,

Members of Rescue South Africa team,

Members of different organizations who rendered assistance to Japan after the Earthquake, Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is just over one year since the Great East Japan Earthquake struck the northeast coastline of Japan on 11 March 2011.

Since the disaster, there has been a tremendous outpouring of sympathy and goodwill from all over the world including South Africa. Only one week later, Rescue South Africa was on the ground conducting search activities under the bitter cold. For three months, South African drummers, the Drum Café, visited the areas giving courage to the survivors. Students of the Stellenbosch University went to Iwate Prefecture, one of the most severely affected areas, to collect debris and help the elderly in shelters. Many South African people kindly made donation. The disaster has served to reinforce the already close bond of friendship between our two countries. I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude

to all those who have supported us.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the Japanese people responded to the situation in a remarkably orderly manner, helping each other without losing composure despite deep sorrow. It was an opportunity for Japanese to rediscover our own resilience.

Since then, Japan made steady progress towards reconstruction. Infrastructure and the economies in the affected areas are on a firm path to reconstruction. Reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station have reached a condition equivalent to cold shutdown. Outside the affected areas including the Tokyo metropolitan area, business has returned to normal. The supply chains of Japanese companies are fully recovered. In a nutshell, Japan is open for business, exchange of people and tourism.

Today, we have imported rice and sake produced in Northeastern region of Japan, most severely affected region. They are of the best quality and are not usually available in South Africa. I hope you will enjoy them and think about visiting Japan in the near future.

Despite the hardships, Japan will strive to meet its commitments to the international community especially Africa. The Government's draft budget for FY2012 opens the way for increased ODA for the first time in 14 years. As for Africa, Japan has already met its commitment to double ODA to the region to US\$ 1.8 billion between 2008-2012. Most recently, Japan is in the process of dispatching an engineering unit of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) consisting of up to 330 personnel to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). Looking to the future, Japan will host TICAD V (The fifth Tokyo

International Conference for African Development) in June 2013 in order to promote growth and stability in Africa.

On a personal note, I have arrived in Pretoria Friday last week, to assume my post. Having been posted in Pretoria between 6 March 1996 to 14 February 1998, I very much look forward to renewing my friendship with the people of South Africa and to working closely with the Government of South Africa in the coming years. (END)