

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Maruyama Norio at the Official Handover and Opening of the Training Programme on Non-Revenue Water Management (22 March 2021)**

Hon Ms Lindiwe Sisulu,  
Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation,

Hon Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma  
Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

Hon Mr David Mahlobo  
Deputy Minister of Human Settlement, Water and Sanitation:

Cllr. Thembu Nkandimeng  
President of SALGA

Mr Phillip Nel  
Member of Municipal Council

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Honorable Ministers and Deputy Minister for your presence today.

This is the first Japanese technical assistance project in the sector of water supply.

Your presence today honors this first-ever project.

I would also like to commend the efforts made by the staff, both of the Department and JICA.

I can imagine how hard you worked to make today's opening ceremony happen, during these difficult circumstances due to COVID-19.

Honorable Ministers,

This project is continuing at a crucial moment for South Africa.

As the vaccination program has started, and the number of positive cases constantly decline, the crucial theme for South Africa is now how to accelerate a recovery from COVID-19.

President Ramaphosa at SONA this year called for economic recovery and economic reform.

He said that higher rates of growth and employment will not be achieved without implementing the structural economic reform.

It is clear that the economic recovery of South Africa needs to be a resilient one.

The skills development of youth, and economic reform, will be the key to this resilient recovery.

The objective of the Japanese assistance in the sector of water supply is to give a support for the skills development of officials of local municipalities, who are facing challenges from non-revenue water.

The area of non-revenue water is one of the major challenges which "Operation Vulindlela", which drives the economic reform of South Africa, is focusing on.

This Japanese assistance will help municipalities to improve their performance in water services, addressing the challenges for the economic reform at deep roots level.

In short, this assistance addresses at the same time both skills development and economic reform, two of the indispensable elements to a resilient economic recovery in South Africa.

Honorable Ministers,

Skills development is our long-term commitment.

When President Ramaphosa visited Japan in 2015 as Deputy President, both sides shared the view that skills development of the youth is crucial for the future of South Africa.

Some of the Japanese projects of skills development are linked to job opportunities or helping industries to be more competitive, such as the training we provide to the fitters and turners of TVET colleges, and Kaizen.

It will support one of the priorities for the economic recovery of South Africa, namely to strengthen export competitiveness.

The project that we celebrate today is part of our effort to support the economic reform of South Africa.

It is more than a skills development project we provide to local municipalities.

It's a skills development that enables economic reform.

Japanese projects related to skills development will create a synergistic effect to drive inclusive and sustainable growth for a resilient recovery.

Honorable Ministers,

Before closing my remarks, allow me to say a few words on our bilateral relations.

The year 2019 was a year of unprecedented splendour and importance for Japan-South Africa relations.

Among others, South Africa's victory in the Rugby World Cup hosted in Japan was not only a historic moment for the people of South Africa, but also a great opportunity to tighten the bonds between the people of the two countries.

Most notably, President Ramaphosa visited Japan three times during the year, an unprecedented event in the history of Japan-South Africa relations.

Given all the above remarkable developments, the year 2020 should have seen a further boost in relations between the two countries.

However, due to COVID-19, numerous opportunities were lost.

Nevertheless, despite many constraints, Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, physically travelled to South Africa at the end of last year and held a bilateral meeting with Dr. Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation.

The two Ministers exchanged their views on a wide range of issues including our cooperation on skills development for youth, and the economic recovery of South Africa.

This year we will continue to make every effort to strengthen our cooperation in various areas, including all bilateral forums, consultations and events which have until now been postponed due to COVID-19.

The first strong signal to re-boostour bilateral cooperation this year is today's opening of the training yard and the launch of the training program on non-revenue water.

This project is an important step to implement economic reform, and it contribute toward making resilient the economic recovery of South Africa.

Economic recovery with Japan

Thank you