

Speech by H.E. Mr. Kazuya Ogawa, Ambassador of Japan, on the  
occasion of the Karate-do Japan Ambassador Cup, August 31,  
2014

- Hon. Joseph Habineza, Minister of Sports and Culture
- Mr. Theo Uwayo, President of FERWAKA

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and gentleman,

It is my great pleasure and honor to celebrate the 1<sup>st</sup> Karate-do Japan Ambassador Cup. There are at present about 1000 karateka in Rwanda. I understand that karate is one of popular sports in this country. I think now it is a good timing to create the Japan Ambassador Cup to encourage Rwandan karateka and also FERWAKA.

Firstly I would like to touch upon a little bit the history of karate in Rwanda. Karate has a long history of more than 500 years and is said to be one of largest sport by population in the world. Rwandan Karate has been initiated since 1980's. The 1<sup>st</sup> Japanese Karate instructor, Mizutani Hidekazu of Wado-kai, here present, came to Rwanda to train Rwandan from 1987 to 1989 under the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers Program. Today Mizutani sensei is invited to this Cup and plays a role as a main referee at the final match as all of us have seen.

Needless to say, Rwanda has experienced genocide in 1994 and

because of such tragedy, almost all Karate trainees were murdered or disappeared. Those days, Rwandans weren't able to practice Karate constantly. In the meantime, Karate was nearly forgotten by Rwandans. Nevertheless, some of the Karate trainers enthusiastically made big efforts to revive Karate and reeducate Rwandan Karate fans. Thus Karate has been getting popular since 2000 year by year.

In 2009, one of the most famous Karate master, Kawazoe Masao sensei, visited Rwanda to introduce Shoto-kan. Based on his advice and arrangement, Russian Karate instructors were invited to come to Rwanda from 2010.

As you know, last year Karate was appointed as one of the elite sports in Rwanda, which means Karate is expected to expand more and be included in Rwandan youth education. It is very certain that Karate can respond to such aspirations.

As you may know, Karate has 2 aspects in its characteristics not only as a sport but also as a martial art which put importance to the self-control. Karate training facilitates trainees to be polite, morale, generous, and respect to others. In Karate training, tough physical strength is just one aspect, so that the trainees are expected to control their weakness and evil mind.

That is why Karate isn't only for the youth but also for the elders. In accordance with trainee's aging, they change their

training approaches. In other words, they can create their own original arts as well as keep their health. Karate can strengthen your life from a point of artistic, physical and psychological views.

Finally I congratulate the winner of today's competition for their performance and also encourage those who practice ardently karate but had no chance to win today to continue your daily training.

Murakoze cyane, Arigatou, Tuzabonana umwaka utaha (see you next year!)