Speech by H.E. Kazuya OGAWA, Ambassador of Japan,

on the Occasion of the Tour of the Project for Construction of

Rusumo International Bridge and One Stop Border Post Facilities

on 23rd June, 2014

Honorable Silas LWAKABAMBA, Minister of Infrastructure,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Muraho. Good afternoon.

It is my great pleasure to come here today for the first time to see the progress of “the project for Construction of Rusumo International Bridge and One Stop Border Post (OSBP) Facilities” at the Rusumo border between Rwanda and Tanzania.

The Rwandan Government has stated that one of its key goals as part of Vision 2020 is to improve the country's infrastructure in order to bring about significant economic growth. This includes developing the country's transport links. Rusumo International Bridge is on the central corridor connecting Dar es Salaam with Kigali. It plays a significant role in regional logistics not only for Rwanda but also for other countries in the East African Community (EAC) and beyond. In this context, Japan is supporting the facilitation of trade among countries in this region by financing this project of total amount of 38 million USD combined with Tanzanian portion.

Although Rusumo is a very important point for commodity distribution between Rwanda and Tanzania, I understand that the current bridge of one lane can only take vehicles under 8 tones and travelling under 5 km per hour; therefore, traffic moves very slowly with limited quantity. Also the existing bridge is now getting older and can not deal with the increase of transportation volume these days. In addition, cumbersome procedure for border crossing is hampering smooth movement of people and merchandise, too.

To solve these problems, this project started in March 2012. A new bridge will allow the permanent use of two lanes possible while increasing the axle load restriction from the present 8 tones to 20 tones, and the speed limit from the current 5 km per hour to 30 km per hour. Therefore, we anticipate that this project will cope with expected increase of the traffic volume in the coming years. Also the elimination of the present traffic congestion through the introduction of an OSBP system, which makes only one stop at the border post instead of the usually required two stops, will greatly improve the efficiency of cargo transportation. We expect the end result of an increase of the physical distribution volume and a significant reduction of the transportation cost. OSBP system itself is a challenge for this region and for that, Japan is also willing to assist to face up this challenge through providing technical assistance.

I sincerely hope the completion of this project will boost trade, investment and competition, not only in Rwanda and Tanzania but also across the EAC member countries and others.

Thanks to Chodai Corporation, Daiho Corporation and Nippon Koei, the Japanese companies which are carrying out the project, and all the staff here, the entire bridge reached the Tanzanian side last February.

Honorable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I said, this is the first time for me to visit the Rusumo border. I have had a long-held desire to visit and finally I could make it today. It is said that seeing is believing. This is true. I am very impressed to see the actual progress on the project.

I’d like to commend the project team of JICA and its collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure through the Rwanda Transport Development Agency (RTDA), as well as the entire staff working here for this project of great importance. This project is due to be completed in November this year. I am very looking forward to coming back here for a completion ceremony next time. But the most important is “safety first”. I wish you all the completion of the project without any accident.

Thank you for your attention.

Murakoze cyane.