

**SPEECH BY H. E. MR. KUNIO HATANAKA, AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN ON THE
OCCASION OF THE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF HIS MAJESTY THE
EMPEROR OF JAPAN ON 27TH NOVEMBER 2012.**

Banyakubahwa:

Honourable Minister of Infrastructure, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament,
Excellencies, Ambassadors, Distinguished Representatives of International Organisations
accredited to Rwanda,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Murakaza neza mwese abari hano muri residanse y'Ambasadori w' Ubuyapani.

Mumbabarire kubera ubu sitani buto cyane. *(Je souhaite à tout le monde ici présent la
bienvenue à la Résidence de l'Ambassadeur du Japon. Je vous prie également de bien vouloir
m'excuser de ce jardin très étroit.)*

**Uyu muni kubera igihe maze mu Rwanda, nifuzaga kuvuga byinshi mu
kinyarwanda, ariko ikinyarwanda cyange kiracyari gike cyane.** *(Today after the time I have
been in Rwanda, I wished I could say a lot in Kinyarwanda but my Kinyarwanda is still very poor).*

First of all, I would like to thank you all for joining us today to celebrate the birthday of His
Majesty Emperor Akihito who turns 79 years old this year. In fact, His Majesty's birthday falls on
23rd December but since this date coincides with Christmas holidays for many of you, we have
decided to celebrate it in advance.

Since the system and history of our imperial family are very unique to Japan, I would like to briefly touch upon them on this occasion.

Although, the oldest archaeological evidences of the roots of our imperial family are found in the artefacts of around 3-4th century in the western part of Japan, ancient Japanese literature records that the origin of our imperial family dates back to 660BC. From the first Emperor, called Jinmu-Tennou, His Majesty Emperor Akihito is the 125th Emperor.

During medieval and early modern periods, while the Emperor stayed in Kyoto, the political power became to be dominated gradually by samurai, feudal warriors, and it was after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 that the Emperor moved to Tokyo.

Following the process of modernisation in the late 19th century, the imperial family came back to the centre of politics again, as the Emperor came to be regarded as the basis of legitimacy of our nation against the samurai regime.

After the Second World War, the Emperor was turned into the symbol of Japan under our current constitution, and since then, has been cherished by all Japanese people who appreciate our culture and tradition.

I hope it is clear now that our nation is not a republic but a constitutional monarchy.

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament, Excellencies, Ambassadors,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, Japan and the Republic of Rwanda have celebrated the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. It is my pleasure to say that our two countries have been promoting friendly relations, especially in the last 18 years.

Thanks to our cordial relationship, in 2010, Japan realised the establishment of its Embassy here in Kigali. Since then, the Embassy has been expanding its activities, among others, those related to economic cooperation and cultural exchange. Also, I would like to emphasise that Japan has received many important Rwandan figures, most notably His Excellency President Paul Kagame, on the occasion of TICAD IV in 2008.

Taking such opportunities, Japan has succeeded in deepening the relationship with Rwanda. I am very much grateful to all those who have contributed to the establishment of our two countries' friendly relations.

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament, Excellencies, Ambassadors, Distinguished
Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think I now have to take up TICAD, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. TICAD was launched in 1993 with the objectives of promoting high-level policy

dialogues between African leaders and development partners, including those from the civil society and the private sector, and mobilising support for Africa's home-grown development initiatives. Based on these objectives, Japan has been strengthening its commitment towards Africa's development, by placing strong emphasis on the aspects of human security and private-sector-led growth, while contributing to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Next year June, Japan, with its co-organizers, namely the African Union Commission, the United Nations, UNDP and the World Bank, will organize TICAD V in Yokohama, one of the largest cities in Japan, with the basic concept of "transformation for quality growth". It is also our aim that TICAD V will make a substantial contribution to establishing a post-MDGs development framework, focusing on employment and job creation, and equity and sustainability.

In conclusion, the Embassy will continue to support Rwandan's efforts toward achieving VISION 2020, and to foster mutual understanding through our two countries' economic, political, and cultural cooperation. As part of this, I will closely work with the people and the Government of Rwanda for reflecting the voices of Rwanda, as well as Africa at large, into the expected outcomes of TICAD V.

May I now propose a toast to the good health of His Majesty Emperor Akihito and His Excellency President Paul Kagame, as well as to the happiness of the people of Japan and Rwanda, and, of course, all of you here.

Thank you for your attention.

Murakoze cyane.