

**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 9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2011.**

**Murakaza neza mwese abari hano muri residanse y'Ambasadiri w' Ubuyapani. Mumbabarire kubera ubu busitani buto cyane.** (Welcome all of you to come over to the Residence.)

**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 78 years old this year. In fact, His Majesty's birthday falls on 23<sup>rd</sup> December but since this date coincides with Christmas holidays for many of you, we have decided to celebrate it in advance.

This year, we have faced the extraordinary challenges of recovery from the Great East Earthquake and devastating tsunami, which struck on 11<sup>th</sup> March. Nearly 20,000 people were killed or remain missing. This was one of the worst natural disasters in the history of Japan. On behalf of the people of Japan, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude again to the people of Rwanda and all of you here. Rwanda was in fact one of the first countries, which extended heartfelt condolence to the government and the people of Japan, and offered support to the earthquake victims.

Since last March, Japan has been exerting all efforts to restore and reconstruct the disaster-affected areas, and damaged supply chains are close to full restoration. Such speedy and steady recovery would have never been achieved without your support, together with your encouraging expressions of friendship and solidarity.

**Ndashimira rero cyane abantu bose badufashije mu bibazo twagize kandi nanejwe no kubonako mwadutabaye vuba.** (*So, I thank all those who helped us and I was happy to see that you came to our aid fast*).

As our Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda strongly reiterated in his address to the United Nations General Assembly this year, we will continue to be fully engaged in all efforts for the restoration and reconstruction, as our highest priority task, so that Japan's renewal can be realised without delay. In the process, Japan will pursue a future oriented and open reconstruction programme, by strengthening ties with and taking in the dynamism of Rwanda and the rest of the world.

With regard to the accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Plant, I am fully aware that some are still concerned about the current situation of the plant. However, we are making a steady progress towards securing the stable control of the plant. The government of Japan will continue to provide prompt and accurate information on this matter with transparency. Therefore, I would like you to make sound judgments based upon scientific evidence.

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliaments, Excellencies, Ambassadors, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to briefly touch upon the system and history of our imperial family for those who were not present last year.

Although, the oldest archaeological evidences of the roots of our imperial family are found in the artifacts of around 3-4<sup>th</sup> 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 125<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Ladies and Gentlemen,

The coming year of 2012 will be memorable for both Rwanda and Japan. It will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rwanda's independence, as well as our diplomatic relationship. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to those who have been working hard to establish the Japan-Rwanda relationship, especially after the tragedy of 1994. I am highly honoured to be stationed in Rwanda as the ambassador of Japan in this significant year, and believe that my responsibility is to deepen the cordial relationship we are enjoying now.

**Nishimiye kuba ndi Ambasaderi wa mbere w'Ubuyapani mu Rwanda** (*I am happy to be the first Japanese Ambassador to Rwanda.*)

In conclusion, after having faced the catastrophic disaster, we have reaffirmed that we have strong bonds with the world. Although it will still take time to ease our heartache, it is time to look to the future, and show our will and ability to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the people of Rwanda and the world at large. In the coming year, I hope we will actively move forward hand-in-hand with you all, through further deepening solidarity.

Thank you for your attention.

**Murakoze cyane.**