

**SPEECH BY H. E. MR. KUNIO HATANAKA,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING RECEPTION OF THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA ON 9 JULY 2010**

Mr. Eugene Munyakayanza, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Excellencies Ambassadors, Distinguished representatives of International Organizations accredited to Rwanda,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

*Murakaza neza! (Welcome)*

I wish to first of all express my sincere gratitude to all of you who kindly participated in tonight's reception on the occasion of the opening of the Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Rwanda. Although we have very carefully selected this day in avoiding possible duplication with the football matches of the FIFA World Cup, your presence tonight is extremely encouraging.

Indeed, the Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Rwanda was officially opened on 1<sup>st</sup> of January this year and I myself came here at the end of February as first resident Ambassador of Japan to Rwanda. We believe that the establishment of our Embassy in Kigali will contribute to further strengthen the already existing friendly relations between our two countries and people. We also believe that our presence here will enhance coordination among bilateral and multilateral donors, who are dedicated to the development of Rwanda.

Taking this opportunity, let me briefly explain to you some historical aspects of the relations between Rwanda and Japan. The cradle of our relations can be traced back to 1965, just few years after the independence of Rwanda. In that year, Mr. Masaya HATTORI of the Bank of Japan was sent to this country as second Governor of the Banque Nationale du Rwanda, under the sponsorship of International Monetary Fund (IMF). Starting from making successful negotiations on the first program with IMF, he played a big role for the establishment and development of Rwandan financial system. He also made many suggestions in other fields including public transportation system between Kigali and other provinces. This idea was realised by the creation of ONATRACOM which is still in operation even today. He finally stayed here until 1975

assuming the responsibility of the Governor of Central Bank for six years, although he intended to stay only one year at the time of his assignment.

Together with the late Mr. Hattori, another famous Japanese we should be proud of in relation to Rwanda is Dr. Sadako OGATA. Dr. OGATA, who was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees between 1991 and 2000, helped to coordinate much needed aid in mid-1990s for many Rwandan refugees and internally displaced people. Today, she is still contributing to this country's development as the head of Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA.

It is also to be noted that thanks to her activities, the Government of Japan sent in 1994 one of the first foreign missions of the Japanese Self Defense Force to Goma in order to coordinate humanitarian assistance and assure safety in refugees camps there.

I would like to mention equally that the visit of many important Rwandan figures to Japan played an important role in deepening the relationship between our two countries. His Excellency President Paul KAGAME, who has visited our country already three times, is one good example. All of our Embassy staffs are very much grateful to all those people who have contributed to the establishment of our two countries' friendly relations.

Honorable Ministers, Excellencies Ambassadors, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now touch upon the similarities between Rwanda and Japan. Very narrow land with high density population as well as quasi non-availability of natural resources are some of our common features. In other words, our similar key word for "Development" is "Human Resources", which are the only abundant resources in both countries.

Fortunately, Rwanda is a country with strong ownership and determination towards self-help. Based on our experiences of having recovered from completely devastated situation after the World War II, as well as of having successfully collaborated with a certain number of Asian countries for their economic and social development, we believe that Rwanda can overcome all handicaps and difficulties with its ownership and self-help efforts. We also wish that our experiences would be useful for the development of Rwanda.

Japan has been strengthening its engagement in African development through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process since 1993. The TICAD process focuses on 'Economic Growth', 'Human Security' and 'Environment and Climate Change issues', all of which Rwanda has been addressing so well. As for bi-lateral cooperation for Rwanda, we have been particularly active in the areas of Human Resource Development, Rural Development, Economic Infrastructure and Industrial Development. It would be our utmost pleasure if we could further intensify such privileged bi-lateral cooperation in harmony with all international donor community here.

Last year as many as 1,500 Japanese tourists visited this country. Those tourists, who also travelled around other African countries as well, often tell on their return back to Japan that Rwanda is the best among the visited countries. They cite the comfortable weather and unique natural landscapes, which are different from those of Asian tropics, but most of them if not all, are particularly impressed by the cleanness and safety of this country.

*Uko Abayapani benshi basura u Rwanda nifuzako Abanyarwanda benshi nabo bazasura Ubuyapani.* (As many Japanese visit Rwanda I wish many Rwandans will also visit Japan).

In conclusion, as Rwandans get ready to once again elect their leader in the upcoming presidential election, we hope that this election will be held in a peaceful way, and Rwanda continues to be our important partner in the international community sharing the common ideals of democracy and freedom.

Thank you.

*Murakoze cyane.*