



**Statements made by His Excellency Mr. ESTIFANOS Afeworki
Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Japan at the 60th Higashi-
kununomiya International Cultural Award ceremony,
Tokyo May 26, 2026**

Mr. Fumiyasu Akegawa, Chairperson of Higashi-kuninomiya International Cultural Award Commemorative Foundation
Honorable participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, let me extend my deep-felt gratitude and thanks for the 60th Higashi-kuninomiya International Cultural Award bestowed to me, in the presence of many esteemed personalities, in this prestigious cultural ceremony being held here in Tokyo today.

It is a great honor for me to be part of this important cultural award of Japan founded following the wishes of the late Prince Morihiro Higashi-Kuni to honor individuals who made significant contributions to Japan and the world.

As a diplomat of my country, the State of Eritrea, stationed here in Tokyo since 2003, my main task has been to foster and facilitate regional peace, trade, investments, creating people-to-people communication bridge for building and enhancing the cultural understanding trajectory, which existed for centuries between our peoples, by utilizing all available communications tools in local and international forums here in Japan.

On this important occasion, allow me to take the opportunity to give honorable participants a brief snapshot of the last 90 years history of the bilateral relations between Eritrea and Japan.

Modern history of the Japan-Eritrea nation states dates back to the Italian Colonial Administration period of Eritrea. Diplomatic relation between Japan and the “Italian Colonial Administration of Eritrea” was established in September 1936. Japan and Eritrea had an active cultural, trade and investment exchanges since that period. Eritrea was one of the major exporters of industrial salt and fertilizer products to Japan going back to that period.

Local and Japanese experts from Nippon Mining also revealed rich major base and precious mineral deposits occurring in the areas of Embaderho, Adi Rassi, Debarwa, Adi Nefas, Weki and other areas in Eritrea in the early seventies. Japanese companies have also made several investments in leather, cotton, house-wares, aluminum and other small and medium manufacturing enterprises in Eritrea in the late sixties and early seventies.

Japan started Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) for Africa in the early 1970. The first Yen-loan agreement was signed with Ethiopia in May 1973. This period coincides with the beginning of “Ethio-Nippon Mining” and other investment activities in Eritrea, that I just mentioned briefly.

After the independence of Eritrea (1991): in view of its long and short term interest and in line with the natural give-and-take-relations that existed between both countries for many years in areas of trade, investment, tourism and other mutual partnership programs in the past, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of Japan was targeted from the onset to participate in the rebirth of the economy of our country i.e. mining, fisheries, agroindustry, SMEs, coastal development - infrastructure development as well as in the new eight colleges that were established to offer science, engineering technology,

agriculture, business, economics, marine sciences, health and technical education with an expected desirable outcome to the improvement of educational system in Eritrea through Japanese experiences and to the mutual development of future trade and investment of both countries.

Therefore, without losing sight of the past and the developed and emerging economies in Asia and their reflection and influences to the economies of African countries in general and Eritrea's economy in particular, I have tried my level best, as the first resident Ambassador of my country to Japan, to the enhancement and development of this historic relationship. The push and pull of the global economic powers and its subterfuges in the Middle East, the Nile basin and the Horn of Africa countries was also a big challenge during this important period of our common history.

I believe, as in the past, Eritrea Japan future trajectory of a successful bilateral relations shall be dictated by an enhanced and developed technical cooperation tie-ups in geological research, exploration and, related energy and resources diplomacy for revitalizing futuristic and sustainable businesses.

Hence, building a robust bridge between Eritrea and Japan or for that matter between Africa and Japan was not a choice but a must during the last two decades of my service here in Tokyo.

Thank you again for giving me this chance,

ESTIFANOS Afeworki, Ambassador
State of Eritrea
Tokyo
May 26, 2026