

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. ESTIFANOS Afeworki, Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Japan and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo on the dinner party hosted by the President of the House of Councillors His Excellency Mr. Masaaki Yamazaki at his official residence in Tokyo February 26, 2015**

**President of the House of Councilors H.E. Mr. Masaaki Yamazaki,**

**Vice-President of the House of H.E. Mr. Azuma Koshiishi,**

**Excellencies and Dear Colleagues,**

**Honorable guests present, and**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Konbanwa!

First of all, allow me to express that it is a great honor and privilege for me to extend, on behalf of the African Diplomatic Corps present here and myself, to His Excellency the President of the House of Councilors of Japan Mr. Masaaki Yamazaki our profound gratitude and appreciation for the New Year dinner hosted to honor us.

Secondly, please allow me, by taking this opportune time of friendly party environment, to say a few words on the ever growing bilateral and multilateral relations between Japan and Africa (African countries) especially issues of war and peace, mutual visits and the loci of the trajectory of the African countries' continued dialogue and diplomacy with Japan.

At present, there is no question about it: terrorism, war, conflicts and major power tensions are on the rise and of a phenomenal concern which are threatening global peace and stability. Therefore, I believe, that it is natural and of course of at-most importance for Japan and Africa to see eye-to-eye and exchange candid ideas and opinions on these important issues which are currently unfolding globally.

As we all know, 54 independent nation states in Africa and other major powers like Japan have very little say in the United Nations Security Council today. It is also a well-known fact that Russia, Great

Britain, France and China, who have the veto power in the UNSC, are deciding forces of war and peace.

The world is changing very fast, and to briefly state, it is not at all naive to say that the global picture is not all roses: financial crisis, energy crisis, climate change, commodity and money market crisis, currency war, regional upheavals and conflicts, new health threats like Bird Flue, Ebola etc. and their spill over effects, many other forms and kinds of security challenges are unfolding and being reported with an amazing speed and density, everyday, live on our TV screen. With these and other global challenges on the rise, the demands on the United Nations are obviously becoming immense, rising and getting complicated day-by-day. Humanitarian situation has deteriorated to an unprecedented level globally never seen since the Second World War.

In such a complicated national and international situation facing our planet: Is the UN providing an ideal platform for international action? Is UN offering legitimacy for global common engagement of international rule of law, true to its universal membership? Is the UN practicing an inclusive decision-making processes? Is the UN unequalled/impartial in its reach to address security threats currently facing humanity? And above all, is the UN providing critical ability to provide services that are essential to international peace, security, stability and prosperity? Is the African Union peace and security architecture constructively engaged with the UN?

No matter how, when, how, why and what we reply to these and other important and legitimate questions that can be raised, the need to reform the UN to tackle those challenges, at this particular juncture of history, is not only important but a recognized essential current factor on the ground shaping our future especially for the continent of Africa, African countries and other major economic powers like Japan.

Hence, Mr. President, it is imperative that Japan and Africa show their commitment to international rule of law, duty and obligation and to take their rightful international role at this moment of time in history. It is for this simple reason that I believe that Japan and Africa must remain actively and mutually seized on all issues concerning the UN Reform. More than any time in the past, it is to our common interest of peace, security, stability and prosperity to define afresh

the trajectories of our geopolitical mutual path now. Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process offers this opportunity between Japan and African countries.

In the past twenty-three years, since the TICAD process was launched in 1993, Japan and African countries bilateral ties have grown steadily and surely despite the barriers of geography. Many mutual missions have traveled to/from Japan and Africa and have exchanged ideas and opinions with heads of states, political leaders, parliamentarians, business leaders, academia, youth, civic, clubs, athletes, cultural exchanges, media leaders and most of all government bodies and bureaucrats during this period. These mutual efforts and continued dialogue have definitely contributed significantly in deepening and strengthening the mutual understanding between Japan and Africa and African countries.

There is no question that Japan's constructive engagement through the past five TICADs and assistance and support provided across the continent to the development efforts of our countries, in various sectors, was of great significant to this process.

Mr. President,

Needless to say, these continued mutual dialogue from all sectors to/from Africa and Japan are key to the successful implementation of partnership between Japan and Africa and African countries. Hence, I believe, it is imperative that Mr. President and other parliamentarians must encourage and support the enhancement of such activities. I am saying this because of the clarity and substance of the working papers of TICAD V so far developed: Yokohama Action Plan, Implementation Matrix and Monitoring Mechanisms clearly testify the road of cooperation between Japan and Africa is on the right direction.

Africa offers Japan many strategic opportunities. I will not dwell on the details of these in this party, but I have the honor to briefly state that African Diplomatic Corps here in Tokyo has been promoting in its collective diplomacy that clearly recognizes the cardinal role that Japan's investment can play in the national development imperatives of our countries and Africa by utilizing and concretely supporting Africa's strategic location, rich resources and fostering the transfer of technologies, know-how and SME's development in order to expand

our exporting capabilities. Because, Japan's experience is seen by many of us in the continent of Africa, if not all, as a successful example, if not the best example of development, after the 2nd World War, and is very appealing for our countries to emulate. It is to our mutual interest for the business community of Japan to see and get convinced that Africa is a destination of opportunities.

Mr. President,

Last but not least, I would like to express our gratitude, on behalf of myself and on behalf of the African Diplomatic Corps (ADC) here in Tokyo, for the continued efforts and supports extended through TICAD by Japan, to the nation building and self-efforts of our African countries.

Let me also reiterate once again in this meeting also, to request and recommend Japan to create and achieve a strong bondage with Africa on sports and culture prior to Tokyo Olympics 2020. Public Diplomacy must be given enough attention – let's shake hands where the heartbeat of African and Japanese people is i.e. in sports and culture.

Thank you