

**WELCOME REMARKS BY H.E. MR. ESTIFANOS AFEWORKI, AMBASSADOR OF THE STATE OF ERITREA AND THE DEAN OF AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON IMA NO AFRICA EVENT AT HIBIYA PARK, JUNE 16-17, 2018**

Foreign Minister of Japan Mr. Taro KONO

Chairman of Japan – AU Parliamentary Friendship Association

Honorable Ichiro AISAWA Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Iwao HORII

Mr. Katsunori WATANABE Deputy Mayor City of Yokohama

Mr. Tsuyoshi YAMAMOTO Special Advisor to the Governor on International Affairs, Tokyo Metropolitan Government

Director General of the African Affairs Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Takeshi OSUGA

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

In my capacity as Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of the State of Eritrea, allow me to welcome all of you to IMA NO AFRICA event organized for the first time by 38 African Embassies in Tokyo, which is being held during this weekend from 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018. We are honored by your presence and thank you so much for coming to this event by sacrificing your weekend rest to be with us in the opening.

As you might all know, a task group under the chairmanship of Ambassador Maina of Kenya of the African Diplomatic Corps' Media, Culture and Tourism Committee with the support and participation of Japan public and private sectors has produced a wonderful product for all of us to benefit and enjoy this weekend. Please, let us give them a round of applause for their successful and wonderful work.

Allow me also, to briefly mention here in the first place, why the African Diplomatic Corps decided to organize these important event of IMA NO AFRICA in the spirit of African ownership and partnership with the public and private sector of Japan.

The African Diplomatic Corps believes that this event:

- 1) is a **Means**, to improve and enhance understanding between Japan and Africa/African countries,
- 2) is a **Stimulus**, to conserve and continuously improve the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) processes and activities,
- 3) is a **Vehicles**, for exposing the potential of Africa/African countries to Japanese and international investors, and

4) **is a Venue**, to provide opportunities for Japanese and Africans from different walks of life: businesses, academia, government leaders, bureaucrats, politicians, artists, media and local folks to conduct mutual dialogues.

Please kindly be informed that the 38 African countries represented here are ready to exchange ideas and opinions with you for the next two days. Let's not talk about Africa. Let's talk directly to Africa in this event.

IMA NO AFRICA showcasing Africa Today is a statement of friendship, call for action and engagement by the African Diplomatic Corps to all friends of Africa in Tokyo and Japan prior to the continued TICAD VII YOKOHAMA 2019. Let's us talk business now because it is in the mutual interest of all African countries and Japan.

This weekend mission of IMA NO AFRICA is to help make Africa/African countries one of the many economic, social and cultural destinations of Japan in the world.

Thank you