

**Statement made by H.E. ESTIFANOS Afeworki,
Ambassador of the State of Eritrea and Dean of the
African Diplomatic Corps (ADC) in Tokyo on the
luncheon held in honor of H.E. Mr. Stuart Harold
COMBERBACH Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Zimbabwe and
outgoing Dean of ADC to Japan on March 26, 2014.**

Your Excellency Mr. Stuart Harold COMBERBACH,

Your Excellencies and Dear Colleagues,

Today we are here, gathered in this Sayonara Luncheon, to honor and bid farewell, our Dean, a leading member of the African Diplomatic Corps, who is a dear friend and colleague, to all brothers and sisters present in this luncheon and dear colleagues in all our missions who could not make it or are outside of this gathering, H.E. Mr. Stuart Harold Comberbach, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Japan.

The Ambassador has served the Republic of Zimbabwe and the continent of Africa with a distinguished leadership, wisdom, diplomatic skill marked with an eminent performance of solidarity and friendship which was highly appreciated and valued by all the members of the African Diplomatic Corps, the delegation of the European union, international organizations in Tokyo and all our local partners at different levels, both in the public and private sector, in Japan: i.e. politicians, parliamentarians, government bureaucrats, academia, business leaders and friends of Zimbabwe extending for a period of 11 years since January 22, 2003.

Prior to His Excellencies posting to Tokyo, the Ambassador has served his country in different capacities in Zimbabwe and foreign services: chief among which were: the National Military Service, Representative to Gabon, different posts in the MOFA of Zimbabwe, Head of Zimbabwe Trade Mission and Representative to South Africa, Ambassador to Italy and Permanent Representative to FAO, Permanent Secretary to Industry, Permanent Secretary to Trade and International Trade as well as member to the Board of Censors, Central African Pharmaceutical Society, Zimbabwe Defense Industries (ZDI) and National Oil Company of Zimbabwe (NOCZIM).

The Ambassador has shared graciously his long time experience of diplomacy in Africa and Europe with African Diplomatic Corps (ADC) through active participation in all the activities of the group. His Excellency was always present among us with a high note of spirit, on time, prepared, dressed in a big smile, on a well thought out mission of diplomacy not to make enemies but friends in the last 11 years.

While coordinating events like AICHI EXPO2005, which was global in nature and the last three TICADs which were basically continental, we have all seen and witnessed, His Excellency, working with an exceptional, genuine gut feeling, management skill, coordination and commitment - focused to the successful completion of the continued dialogue of friendship and solidarity between Japan and Africa in general, and Japan and the Republic of Zimbabwe in particular.

When the Republic of Zimbabwe was faced with all kinds of diplomatic challenges, pressure, constraints, and problems, including but not excluding economic sanctions in its nation building challenges during the last decade, His Excellency kept his head high above the clouds, focused in his mission to communicate and promote to Japan the strategic importance of Zimbabwe, and the continent of Africa. It is not easy for me to detail how the Ambassador managed to achieve this level of resilience during this luncheon; but I can say with full confidence, from what I witnessed for the last eleven years in Japan, H.E. Mr. Comberbach's skill of communication was simply brilliant and impressive.

His Excellency came to Japan in 2003. This was the period when African Diplomatic Corps reached a consensus to collectively lobby for the introduction of 1) a clear policy paper which includes the mutual interest of Japan and Africa/African countries, 2) Implementation plan with a matrix, and 3) monitoring mechanism and established procedures, to the TICAD process. His Excellency is leaving in 2014: with all the above flagships, put in their rightful place as key documents to serve as instruments in enhancing and deepening mutual relationship between Africa and Japan, in different common areas of interest and cooperation such as: peace, trade, investment, agriculture, infrastructure, environment, energy, health, education and other sectors of mutual benefits.

Your Excellency came to Japan in 2003. This is when the ADC

collectively lobbied for the inclusion of the then OAU, now the AUC to be included as co-organizer in the TICAD process, Your Excellency is leaving in 2014: with this very important organization of Africa sitting in the front row chair representing the vision of the founding fathers, member states and most of all peace, stability, prosperity, cooperation and unity of the people of the continent. Through Your Excellency and ADC's collective diplomacy, three basic notions of dialogue were relentlessly promoted, shared and communicated in the last decade to our development partners here in Tokyo: 1) Africa is not a country and 2) ODA must not be a boomerang, and 3) African countries must be understood for their strategic importance as a mutual trade and investment destinations to/from Japan. Because TICAD is not and was not a "Marshal Plan to Save Africa", but a process for building a mutual beneficial strategic partnership and bridge between Japan and Africa and African countries.

Though, the skeleton of the TICAD V matrix is in place now, as always said, the devil is in the details, the issue of when and how the requisition of a country specific built-in plans, projects, schemes owned by African governments and regional agencies are going to be the primary beneficiaries of the process is still a task ahead of all of us since their implementation depend on our national and regional developments priorities, needs and requirements.

How can the public and private sector in each of our countries and region profit from such a process?

Under the TICAD V pledged fund by Japan, different projects are expected to start on grant aid of technical collaboration projects or yen credit basis with our countries and regions. What are the windows of opportunities for each African country to be beneficiaries of these pledges? Is this fund available or accessible to all African countries, in what mode, where will be this discussed, in Tokyo, in our headquarters, if it is in different place and venue where, when, how and who, and other relevant issues of the implementation matrix which are currently outlined successfully by the co-organizers still remain to be addressed through bilateral and multilateral mutual dialogue with Japan.

As we all aware, Japan is also aiming to increase its military, political and economic clout in the African continent in 2014 - 2017. Hence, it is imperative now to see for ways and means of boasting ADC's

collective diplomacy to support, promote and coordinate with regional policies and programs of ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD, CEMAC and AMU during this period.

TICAD has come of age now, and Your Excellency's charismatic leadership and the collective efforts of all ADC members has definitely impacted this processes to evolve into its current status of a mutually beneficial diplomatic, political, security, trade, investment and development cooperation platform between Japan and Africa.

Last but not least, in March 2011 during Tōhoku big earthquake and tsunami, when Japan faced a challenging wrath of nature and the Fukushima nuclear accident, including and not excluding the dangers faced by diplomats and families residing here, Your Excellency's preparedness and resilience was exemplary. ADC members and families who stayed behind during this period here in Tokyo remember your sympathy and stand with the victims of this tragedy on this occasion.

We also remember, on this occasion, on the lighter side of our life here in Tokyo, the Roppongi night out together, before 8 years, when all the telephones in the pockets of our peer group kept ringing from worried wives until the wee hours of the morning, of course with the advice of Your Excellency, no one dared to pick them up.

As it has been said by all our brothers and sisters, Ambassadors who served in Tokyo, many times in this departure lounge in the past, there is time to come but there is also time to go, but let me say during this auspicious moment, when we are all experiencing a natural mixed feeling due to Your Excellencies departure, on behalf of my self, as an incoming dean; and on behalf of ADC, that we all greatly valued your contribution to our collective diplomacy and we would like to extend to you our deepest gratitude and thanks for the kind friendship and charismatic leadership you kindly offered to our group.

I also seize this occasion to thank Your Excellency, once again, for bringing commitment to the African Diplomatic Corps here in Tokyo in the last decade. Your Excellency, please convey to your best half, Mrs. Comberbach (Bendict-Ann), ADC's words of thanks and gratitude, with out her relentless support, your mission definitely would not have been as successful as it became. Your Excellency,

there was a great woman behind you here in Tokyo and in AWAJ.

With this short statement and in conclusion, I would like to call for a toast:

Today in this Sayonara luncheon, on behalf of the excellencies and dear colleagues present and myself, let me wish Your Excellency and your family a continued health, success and prosperity in the future; and

And I call upon excellencies and dear colleagues to join me to raise their glass for this,

Sayonara and Kampai!!