

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Estifanos Afeworki Haile Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Japan and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in the Seminar to Honor Mr. Asahiko MIHARA Deputy President Japan - African Union Parliamentary Friendship League of July 8, 2021**

- Mr. Asahiko MIHARA Deputy President Japan- African Union Parliamentary Friendship League
- Mr. Toshimitsu MOGI, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Honorable Guests
- Excellencies and Dear Colleagues
- Ladies and gentlemen

It is an honor for me to be present here today in this public seminar held to congratulate and express support to the Honorable Mr. Asahiko MIHARA a great friend of Africa and African countries, who has been very much involved as a Japanese citizen at his young age and as a politician at his senior age to build a robust, sustainable and efficient bridge between African countries and Japan for almost half a century now.

Japan's immediate future trading partner is definitely the African continent. Currently Africa is without doubt undergoing rapid economic expansion and the requirement for export of quality infrastructure of Japan to Africa is obviously going to be very significant in this particular period of its history. Therefore, let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude, on behalf of the African Diplomatic Corps, to the very proactive economic diplomacy of Japan through the TICAD process towards this end. Honorable Mr. MIHARA and members of Japan AU Parliamentary Friendship League push and influence have been

vivid and key in all the efforts made so far. Therefore, allow me to take this opportunity to wish you and your colleagues all the success on your continued efforts towards a successful end result.

Japan shall open an Embassy in Eritrea on January 2022. Local and Japanese experts from Nippon Mining, currently known as JX Nippon Mining & Metals, revealed major sulphide deposits occurring in the areas of Embaderho, Adi Rassi, Debarwa, Adi Nefas, Weki and other areas in Eritrea in the early seventies. Japanese companies 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. Their footprints are still all over the country.

Japan started the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) for Africa in the early 1970. The first Yen-loan agreement was signed with Ethiopia on May 1973. This period coincides with the beginning of Nippon Mining and investment activities in Eritrea.

As in the past, location, business, resources and economic partnerships shall still be the corner stones of future Japan – Eritrea relations. Honorable MIHARA and Honorable OOKA Parliamentary Delegation of Japan visited Eritrea on January 18, 2020. Mr. MIHARA described to me his visit to Asmara as a “nostalgic voyage after 46 years”. I would dare to call it the “re-birth of Eritrea and Japan relationship”.

Thank you again Honorable MIHARA for your constructive diplomacy and we all look forward to working with you in influencing the strategic decision making to boost Japan’s private investment to our African countries including but not excluding Eritrea.

Last but not least, may I also take this opportunity to applaud and express deep appreciation to Japan for holding TOKYO2020 in spite of the global challenges faced by COVID-19 pandemic. The Olympic spirit shall be best expressed and shared by all humanity definitely in TOKYO2020.

An African women cyclist Mosana Debessai from Eritrea will participate in TOKYO2020. Please give a special support to this young woman. She means hope to many.

Arigato Gozaimashita!