

Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Estifanos Afeworki Haile Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Japan and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps at the Virtual Meeting with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) and Japan-Africa Infrastructure Development Association (JAIDA) with African Diplomatic Corps on July 14, 2021

H.E. Mr. Mohammed ELOMMI Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia and Chair of the TICAD Committee in ADC

H.E. Mr. YOKOTA Masafumi Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT)

Mr. MIYAMOTO Yoichi President of Japan-Africa Infrastructure Development Association (JAIDA)

Mr. GOTO Fumikazu Director of International Strategies for Construction Industry Excellencies and Dear Colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen

First of all, allow me to express on behalf of the African Diplomatic Corps and in my capacity as Ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Japan my appreciation and gratitude for organizing this important meeting before TICAD8 Tunis is held in 2022.

The role of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) in the post-World War II economic recovery of Japan is very pronounced in many textbooks as the best practice and experience to be shared with many developing countries. Many African countries have much to learn from such success stories in general and Japanese experience in infrastructure development in particular.

Currently Japan's infrastructure ranks among the best in the world. Of course, this didn't happen in one day. There is no doubt that quality infrastructure investment of Japan can duly play a key role, as a positive ingredient to our countries social and economic transformation, if it can merge seamlessly in the resourceful countries of Africa.

Just to site an example, starting from the Red Sea Port of Massawa, the railways infrastructure of my country rises as an artery of the transportation system of Eritrea to an altitude of 2394 meters at km 115, and then descends to 2342 meters to the capital city Asmara at Km 117.600. The line then continues on a falling grade

to Keren City, altitude 1390 meters km 104 and to Agordat altitude 606 meters, km 188. The line was originally intended to continue to Tesseney City across to the border town of Kessela City in Sudan and construction was completed to Bisha, 31 kms beyond Agordat City. The Agordat – Bisha section was, however, taken up during the war on the eve of the Second World War in 1942 by the British forces. The railway line extended from the Red-Sea Coast across the trade corridor to the food and mining basket of the western lowlands of Eritrea bordering Ethiopia and Sudan. When the railway was running at its maximum, 38 trains were run during 24 hours in each direction and in a span of five years from 1952-to 1957 205,590 tonnages of goods were carried. The Railways Administration of Eritrea employed more than 1700 people and many laborers. This is to give an idea of the possibility of the traffic on this railway. Massawa – Asmara – Keren- Agordat line of 306 kms. Side by side with this also existed, in this part of the world, the longest ropeway in the world that connected the port with the hinterland capital of Eritrea. All these infrastructures and their services were destroyed in the First World War and the long war for independence. I am mentioning these, in this meeting, as example of infrastructures which are no more. The old railway connecting Alexandria of Egypt to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa is no more a dream disturbed but a realistic demand of many African countries. The interconnectivity of Africa both in soft and hard infrastructures is a priority of the continent.

With this small note, let me wish success to our deliberations in this meeting, Quality infrastructure investment is a strategic priority of all African countries and a solid base without which industrialization of Africa and solid trading and investment partnerships shall remain a dream.

Thank you