

**STATEMENT BY H.E. BENSON H.O. OGUTU, AMBASSADOR OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING KENYA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE & 50TH
ANNIVERSARY OF JAPAN-KENYA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
CELEBRATIONS - DECEMBER 12, 2013**

Before I give my remarks, I request all of us to observe a minute of silence in honour of our departed legendary leader, H.E. Mr. Nelson Mandela; the former President of South Africa.

**Our Chief Guest, Honorable Hirotaka Ishihara, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs;
Hon. Yoshihiko Isozaki, Parliamentary Vice Minister, METI;
Hon. Members of the DIET;
Prefectural leaders from various parts of Japan;
Excellencies;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today marks Kenya's Golden Jubilee and 50th Anniversary of Japan-Kenya diplomatic relations. I therefore thank you all very sincerely for joining us to celebrate this auspicious occasion.

Indeed, over the 50 years down history lane, our bilateral relations have continually deepened and widened, into strategic partnerships. This is evidenced by Kenya's privileged stance as a model of Japan's development cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our cordial relations have also rolled over into Japan's earnest support of the implementation of Kenya's development blue-print Vision 2030.

The Vision 2030 is further complemented by the TICAD V priority aspects upon which our development cooperation is currently anchored. In keeping with this economic tenet, Kenya was amongst the first destinations of the mission to Africa, last August by METI Minister, Hon. Motegi. The visit resonated well with the business fraternity both in Kenya and Japan, and is already spurring more interactions between them.

On her part, Kenya has positioned itself to be the premier regional investment hub in the Eastern Africa region. Towards this end, key reforms and major infrastructural developments are being undertaken especially in railways, seaports, airports, and energy sectors. At the same time, we have continued to champion and expedite the integration process in our region, namely; the EAC and COMESA economic blocs, which both give a combined market population of over 400 million.

Japan has been equally instrumental in Kenya's Human resource development in various fields of our development priorities. We look forward to increased collaboration in this vital area within the framework of "ABE" and other initiatives. In the same breath, the country has continued to be the nurturing ground for most of Kenya's phenomenal marathon and other long distance runners whose excellence all over the world is legendary. We are therefore desirous to see more exchanges in sports and related fields in the run-up to 2020 Olympics.

Over the last three (3) years, I have travelled the length and breadth of Japan taking our public diplomacy beyond Tokyo. The Foreign Ministry has also been helpful in organizing useful prefectural study tours for diplomats. I have made many friends in the course of the visits. Most importantly, I have been greatly encouraged by the interest shown by various prefectures in doing business with Kenya. The presence here today of many political leaders, top business executives and other dignitaries from afar attests to this positive development. It is arising out of this interest, and in our desire to see more private sector participation that the Government of Kenya, appointment Mr. Jun Karube, President Toyota Tsusho Corporation, as the first honorary consul of Japan to Kenya based in Nagoya.

In the run-up to today's event, there have been a series of year-long activities both here in Japan and Kenya. One of the key activities is today's launch of the commemorative postage stamp by Japan Post Corporation - the first such undertaking with an African country. This exceptionally kind gesture echoes the special bonds of friendship between our two countries. I sincerely thank Japan Post for this honour. I am also grateful to all our sponsors for their generous contributions which have made this occasion a success.

As I conclude, I once again thank the Government of Japan for remaining a true development partner with Kenya over the years. Kenya at 50 is the place to be. Kenya is ripe for more profitable engagements. The business environment is conducive. Her growth trajectory is promising. Kenya is ready for you. I welcome the private sector to join others and take their rightful places as "*partners in progress*".

With those few observations, I now call upon our Chief Guest, Honorable Hirotaka Ishihara, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs; to make his remarks.

Thank you