

Speech by Ambassador Kikuta
At the Japan Self-Defense Forces Day reception

3 July, 2019

(Protocol)

Dignitaries of Nigerian public and private sections

Ambassadors, High commissioners, Heads of Int'l organizations,
diplomatic corp

Representatives of military circles,

Media

My dear Nigerian friends

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. Thank you for coming.

1. New Era

Ladies and gentlemen,

Japan and Nigeria, both countries have entered into a new era.

In Japan, the new era called “Reiwa” started on 1st of May under the new Emperor.

Reiwa, in Japanese, means “beautiful harmony.” As it is well known, the era of Showa experienced a number of horrendous wars with neighbouring countries. The former Emperor, His Majesty the Emperor of Heisei, stated upon His abdication that it was his great relief that Japan had not experienced a man-made war in the era of Heisei, even though we had many natural disasters. It is our solemn determination that Japan, as a peace loving country, will continue its proactive contribution to peace, stability, and harmony in the world.

In Nigeria, H.E. Muhammadu Buhari has started his 2nd term as President. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, through his special envoy, sent his congratulatory message to the President on 12 June, the new Democracy Day. We regard it as fundamentally important that Nigeria, the most populous nation in the African continent, with an amazing diversity, has maintained democracy for the last twenty years. We

also highly appreciate Nigeria's significant contributions to the stability of other African countries through such schemes as ECOWAS and AU. We wish President Buhari the very best in his 2nd term with His three priorities i.e.: security, anti-corruption and the economy. We are confident that the time is coming for Japan and Nigeria to move our relationship to a new dimension, to the "next level".

2. Japan's support in the field of security

Ladies and gentlemen,

Japan's peaceful constitution, which was drafted after WWII, renounces the use of armed forces as a means of resolving international disputes. It does not mean, however, that Japan does not contribute in the field of security. I would like to share with you a few recent examples of our efforts. Our defense attaché Mr. Mori will later further elaborate on some of them.

-In May this year, Japan started an additional capacity building program with UNDP for a PKO center, namely, the Martin Luther Agwai International Leadership and Peacekeeping Centre based in Kaduna. This program will further enhance the protection of civilians, counter-terrorism, and prevention of irregular migration.

-Also in the same month, the National Defense College dispatched a study tour to Japan, to interact with JSDF and to study their expertise on how to tackle natural disasters.

-Japan has also supported the regional and international efforts to combat illicit activities at sea, including acts of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, through the International Maritime Organization, G7 and the United Nations. I believe anybody can agree on the importance of freedom of navigation based on the rule of law, irrespective of place, e.g. Asia-Pacific Ocean, Straits of Hormuz, Malacca, and Guinea Bay.

-We have also been providing to the North East humanitarian and other support ranging from IDP support, social stabilization, women

and children support, to food security, in collaboration with international organizations such as ICRC, UNWOMEN, UNDP, UNIDO, and WFP. We are doing so with a firm belief that such measures will have an effect on the stability and security of the region. The total amount of the support we have provided since 2013 has added up to over 60 million US dollars.

-Japan will host TICAD7 in Yokohama this August. As I stated last year on this occasion, measures for peace and security in Africa will continue to be one of the important agendas in the TICAD process, because they are so closely intertwined with African development.

3. Role of JSDF

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since its inception, the primary role of JSDF has been strictly restricted to Japan's self-defense. On top of that, however, over the years JSDF is assuming a bigger role in dealing with serious natural disasters and international cooperation. I believe that both the Japanese people and the international society appreciate this expansion of JSDF's responsibility. As we get together here today to commemorate Japan's Self Defense Forces Day, I invite all of you to join me in wishing Nigeria and the world peace and stability.

4. Ending

To conclude, as for the peace of your mind, I believe good Japanese Sushi and Sake will help you a lot. After all, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. You can also take a look at some heart winning Japanese products around the corner.

So, please enjoy yourselves this evening.

Thank you.