



Dear Sir or Madam,

I have the honor to present my compliments and am delighted to deliver the first edition of the *Japanese Ambassador's Newsletter in 2020* to you. As always, I am grateful for your responses to my newsletter. It has been a while since I issued the last edition in October last year. Time flies like an arrow. I have many things to tell you. Please allow me to touch upon especially three items in this letter; 1) Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress Enthronement; 2) Commerce and Cultural events in Lagos; and 3) Imperial Decoration & National Day.

【Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress Enthronement Ceremony】

I recall last year as a historic year marking the beginning of the new era, *Reiwa*, under the New Emperor. The Enthronement Ceremony for His Majesty the Emperor took place in Tokyo on 22nd October 2019 in which the New Emperor proclaimed his enthronement at the Imperial Palace. Representatives from nearly 200 countries and organizations around the world came to Tokyo to participate in the historic event. On behalf of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I was honored by the presence of H.E. Boss Mustapha, Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

Following the Enthronement Ceremony, the celebration parade of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress was conducted in Tokyo on 10th November. About 120,000 well-wishers waved small Japanese flags and cheered for our new Emperor and Empress, as Their Majesties' passed in an open car, specially made for the occasion. It was such a touching moment seeing that Their Majesties are held in high esteem by the people.

【Japan's presence in Lagos】

I also remember last November was filled with events representing great relations between Japan and Nigeria. In the business field, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) led the Japan Pavilion at the Lagos International Trade Fair 2019 to great success with the theme "Made in Japan, Made for Women". The Japan Pavilion with the participation of 37 Japanese companies, the largest number ever, exhibited a wide range of Japanese products from automobiles to women's wigs, and won a



prize for the second year in a row. At the opening ceremony of the Trade Fair on 1st November, I was privileged to have an opportunity to speak on behalf of the international community following the address made by H.E. Ms. Mariam Katagum, Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, ably representing H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari. At the subsequent opening ceremony of the Japan Pavilion, I conducted again a Japanese traditional ritual for good omen, 'braking open a sake barrel' ceremony called *Kagami-Biraki*.



Furthermore, based upon the agreement at the summit meeting at TICAD7, the Japan-Nigeria Business Facilitation Council was established on 18 November 2019. I myself and Ms. Yewande Sadiku, Executive Secretary/CEO of NIPC, were appointed as co-chairs of the council, witnessed by participants including the Honorable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, H.E. Mr. Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo, represented by Mr. Edet S. Akpan, the Permanent

Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment. Following the establishment of the council, the first round of working group meeting took place in Lagos on 21st February. The discussion was fruitful with the participation from the Japanese private sector, Nigerian Ministries, Departments and Agencies, JETRO, the Japanese Embassy and JICA. We will keep up this momentum to further facilitate our business relations.

Our great relations were not limited to the business area. The African International Film Festival (AFRIFF) was held in Lagos from 10th to 16th November 2019. During the film festival, we had a Japan day, where Japanese Animated films were screened for the very first time in Lagos. I express my appreciation to AFRIFF staff, especially, Ms. Chioma Ude, for organizing the events with our Embassy. I had a great time seeing Nigerian audience enjoying Japanese Anime at the newly constructed cinema theater.



【Imperial Decoration & National Day reception celebrating the New Emperor's 60th Birthday】



I am also pleased to inform you that Honorable Senator Udoma Udo Udoma received The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, one of the highest orders awarded in the name of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, as the very first Nigerian recipient. I was honored to have the ceremony of the Imperial Conferment of Decoration, in the presence of Senator Udoma as well as his family and friends, at my residence on 12th February. Considering Senator Udoma's record as a significant bridge builder between Japan and Nigeria, it was not a difficult task to select him as one worthy of recognition by Japan.



In the evening of the same day, I hosted the National Day reception to celebrate our new Emperor's 60th birthday at Hilton Hotel in Abuja. I extend my sincere appreciation to participants for their presence at the reception. I was especially honored by the remarks of H.E. Mr. Boss Mustapha, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, and to have the presence of Ambassador Mustapha Sulaiman, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During my speech at the reception, I mentioned three "first-ers". First, new era REIWA; as it

was the first ever celebration of the New Emperor of Japan's birthday since the beginning of the new Era. Second, as I mentioned earlier, Japan conferred the first ever Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star to a Nigerian, the former Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Udoma, for his outstanding contribution to the bilateral relations between Japan and Nigeria. Last but not least, among the many African countries that gained independence in 1960, it was in Nigeria that Japan opened its Embassy first in the same year. Thus, this year marks the 60th anniversary of the independence of Nigeria as well as the establishment of the Embassy of Japan in Nigeria. By the way, His Majesty the Emperor, too, was born in 1960.

【Future events and beyond】

As you know, Japan will be hosting the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games this summer. When IOC President Thomas Bach visited Nigeria to commission the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa last November, he said that Nigeria is the Olympic headquarters of Africa and Abuja the capital of sports in Africa. Japan and Nigeria share the spirit of the Olympic Movement, and Kisarazu City, the "Host Town" for Team Nigeria, is ready to support pre-games training ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and to welcome the teams. I am also excited for H.E. Mohammed Gana Yisa, Ambassador of Nigeria to Japan, to run in the relay as one of the Olympic torchbearers. I would like to welcome to Tokyo as many Nigerian athletes and players as possible.



Though it is still about 5 years away, Japan is also going to host Osaka Expo 2025. Osaka is one of the biggest merchant cities in Japan. I also welcome you to Osaka to enjoy the atmosphere, which is different from Tokyo's. Expo 2025 should be a great opportunity for Nigeria to demonstrate its big economy.

【In Closing】

If I may borrow the words from President Buhari's New Year message, I have a high expectation that the newly started decade will be a time of hope, optimism and fresh possibilities for our two countries

Finally yet importantly, I would once more like to express my appreciation for your continuous support and understanding for the Embassy's activities.

Yours sincerely,



KIKUTA Yutaka

Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of Japan
to the Federal Republic of Nigeria

*For further information on the Embassy of Japan's activities in Nigeria, please visit our Website and Facebook page.

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