

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Ryoichi Horie,
Ambassador of Japan in the Republic of the Sudan,
On the Occasion of the first “Japan Day”

At 10:50 on 27st of March 2013, Khartoum, Sudan

Dr. Azhari Omer Abdelbagi, Director of Scientific Research and Cultural Relations,

Dr. Abdelrahim Hamid Mugaddam, Director of the Institute of African and Asian
Studies,

Dr. Ismail Hussein Fadl, Lecturer of Institute of African and Asian Studies, and
Member of Parliament,

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of Japan Day!

First of all, on behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to thank
University of Khartoum – Sudan’s leading university with a long and distinguished
history of excellence, and Sudan JICA Office for co-hosting this special event.

Let me start with posing a question to you. What do you picture about
“Japan”?

Many of you may instantly think of various “Made in Japan” high-tech products such as Japanese cars, electronics, as well as machineries that you see in the market on daily basis.

It is natural that one can only hold certain picture of a country without an extensive cultural experience. It was the same for me until I started traveling in Sudan. When I was assigned as the Japanese Ambassador to Sudan in May 2012, my knowledge and understanding of Sudan was very limited. However, I am different now. In the course of 9 months, I have visited twelve states for the purpose of understanding Sudan and its people. Thanks to the warm hospitality of Sudanese people and close interaction with them, I have experienced diverse local culture, ate local food, sang and danced local music, and seen ‘real Sudan’ in respective states. This country is beautiful and truly is mixed of so many different cultures. Deepening the understanding of a country requires direct cultural interaction, and thus I became a fan of Sudan.

In return to such special cultural experience I was given, I would like to provide Sudanese people with the opportunities to learn and perceive “real Japan” through Japan Day program.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, Japan enjoys a mature economy as the third largest economic power in the world. As some of you may already know, this achievement was the result of overcoming the devastation and numerous hardships after the end of World War II in 1945. Believe or not, at the time, Japan borrowed more than 800 million US dollars from the World Bank to rebuild the country. The small island country, whose land is

just one fifth of Sudan, has limited natural resources and lost almost everything as the result of the war. However, within the course of 30 years, Japanese people achieved the miracle recovery and economic growth. The loan from the World Bank was paid off in 1990.

Many people ask me what the secret to Japan's economic growth was. The answer is not simple, and is impossible to explain the keys to the success without understanding the Japanese way of thinking, lifestyle, and cultural background. While education and the investment in human resource have been surely one of the keys to develop the comparative advantage for the country with limited natural resources, cultural aspect of Japan also explains the secret that made the growth possible. Japanese people share the understanding of the importance of self-help. Each person works day by day to fulfill his or her role for a better tomorrow. It should also be mentioned that Japan is not a homogeneous state. The country consists of 47 prefectural governments, with each area having a unique cultural background. However, all citizens share a common Japanese identity and spirit and there is a strong social solidarity established.

11th March marks the 2 years since the Great East Earthquake and Tsunami which caused the devastation of thousands of people's lives in Tohoku area. The recovery process has been tough and long, however, with the spirit of self-help and solidarity, the re-construction of the area has been steadily progressing and will keep progressing with more innovation and new development for the future generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My cultural narratives should stop now, and let the people directly interact with “real Japan”.

I am very happy to send off three new scholarship students to Japan next week. They will be added to 120 Sudanese nationals who have studied in Japan since 1970s. I hope they will enjoy their experience in Japan, and also promote understandings between Japan and Sudan as cultural ambassadors.

Institute of African and Asian Studies at the University of Khartoum hosts increasing number of students who are keen to learn Japanese. This month, the Government of Japan provided grant assistance to the institute to equip the learning facilities for the improved learning environment for Japanese language. I strongly hope that this will advance the capacity of the institute and it will attract more learners of Japanese language.

Finally, Japan Day is an open forum for everyone here to interact with Japanese culture. Today, not only those who have already been to Japan of started learning the language, I would like as many Sudanese as possible to familiarize with the “real Japan” and develop further understanding of Japan and Japanese people. I hope that the program will trigger your further interests in our country.

As I close my remarks, I wish all the best for today’s program, and also wish that this will contribute to harnessing mutual understanding between Japan and Sudan at the grassroots level.

Thank you. Shukuran Jaziran