

Remarks by H.E. Mr. TAKEUCHI Kazuyuki
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia
On the Occasion of the 33rd Japanese Ambassador's Judo Tournament
14th October 2023

Mr. Chileshe Kangwa, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts of the Republic of Zambia,

Mr. Alfred Foloko, President of the National Olympic Committee of Zambia and President of the Judo Association of Zambia

Mr. Shapa Wakunguma, Former President of the Judo Association of Zambia, Judo Ambassador
and other representatives,

Representatives from the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to declare the opening the 33rd Japanese Ambassador's Judo Tournament after two years' break. First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Chileshe Kangwa, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts of the Republic of Zambia, for gracing this tournament with your presence. My appreciation also goes to all the participating judo-kas, the Zambia Judo Association, judo organisations and clubs, coaches, referees, judges and the sponsors.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the close and longstanding relationship between Japan and Zambia through judo.

In 1970, six Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) came to Zambia to teach judo in the country. Five of them were from the police force and one was Mr. MATSUSHITA Bunji, a young judo-ka who had just finished his study on sport science at university. The First President of the Republic of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, warmly welcomed and greeted

this young man as “my brother Bunji”. Mr Matsushita, or Master Bunji, taught judo at a police academy in Zambia for two years. Master Bunji and other Volunteers had the honour to show their performance at the Independence Day Commemoration Ceremony, which made judo broadly known in the country.

This experience in Zambia oriented him toward the promotion of international exchanges through judo. He traveled around 56 countries and returned to Japan to set up a non-profit organisation in his home prefecture Ehime. While teaching judo and English to local children, he prepared more than 40 rooms in an apartment building in his hometown to host and teach judo to foreign students. Among them was Mr. Boas Munyonga from Zambia, who, thanks to his training in Japan, became the first Zambian judo Olympian at the 2012 London Olympics, and later, won a bronze medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Master Bunji cherished the memories of his days in Zambia, and his ties with Zambia continued throughout his life. He sadly passed away last year due to illness, but his story appears in an English textbook for children in Japan, as that of "a man who worked to spread judo in Africa and introduce Japanese culture to the world".

He always kept in mind the word “自他共栄 (Jita Kyohei)”, taught by his professor at the university. It means building harmony and prosperity with others through respect and appreciation. I hope that Zambian judo-kas, inspired by Master Bunji, will pass on the spirit of the Japanese judo-ka to the next generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2024 marks the 60th anniversary of Zambia's independence and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Zambia. We hope to further strengthen the friendship and goodwill between the two countries by holding various commemorative events, including a judo tournament. As Master Bunji demonstrated, Japan-Zambia relations have been nurtured over the years not only through government-to-

government cooperation, but also through people-to-people friendship. I would like to cherish the relationship with all of you that has been created through judo.

Finally, I hope all the participating judo-ka show the best of them. Whatever the result, you will strengthen the bonds between judo-kas and take tighter friendship back to home.

Thank you for your attention.