

Remarks by H.E. Mr. TAKEUCHI Kazuyuki
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia
On the Occasion of the 34th Japanese Ambassador's Judo Cup
16th November 2024

Honourable Elvis Nkandu, Minister of Youth, Sport and Arts of the Republic of Zambia represented by Ms. Phoebe Silabo, Sports Development Manager of National Sports Council of Zambia,
Ms. Dorothy Nyambe Shimo, Vice President of the Zambia Judo Association,

Representatives from the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great honour and pleasure that I welcome you to the 34th Japanese Ambassador's Judo Cup. Today, we gather not only to celebrate the art of judo but also to honour the enduring friendship between Japan and Zambia that has flourished through this remarkable sport.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Ms. Phoebe Silabo for gracing us with her presence today. My heartfelt thanks also go to the National Sports Council, the Zambia Judo Association, all the participating judo-kas, coaches, referees, and everyone who has made this tournament possible. Additionally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Dino Bianchi, CEO of Toyota Zambia - CFAO Mobility, for its generous sponsorship of this event.

For over 50 years, judo has served as a bridge connecting our two nations, founded on shared values of discipline, resilience, and mutual growth. In 1970, six Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) were dispatched to Zambia as the first batch of volunteers. Mr. Matsushita Bunji was one of the six volunteers and was affectionately called "my brother Bunji" by the late President Kenneth Kaunda. Master Bunji taught judo at the Police Academy and performed at Zambia's Independence Day Ceremony, promoting judo widely throughout the country. His lifelong commitment to

promoting international friendship through judo has left a lasting legacy in Zambia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pride that I announce that this year, the Zambia Judo Association has been awarded the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation. This prestigious honour underscores the deep ties between our nations and recognises the Association's commitment to social contribution through the spirit of judo. This includes promoting and disseminating judo in Zambia, youth development, and empowering refugee populations. This will be a moment to reflect on the strength of our partnership and to honour those who have tirelessly nurtured judo in Zambia.

In 2024, we also celebrate the 60th anniversary of Zambia's independence and the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our nations. Through various events, including this tournament, we aim to further strengthen the friendship and goodwill between Japan and Zambia. Like Master Bunji, who dedicated his life to spreading judo in Africa, Japan-Zambia relations have been built on people-to-people connections. I am deeply grateful for all the friendships that have blossomed through our shared love of judo.

To all the judo-kas competing today, I encourage you to embrace the spirit of judo: "Maximum Efficiency, Mutual Welfare and Benefit." It is not just about winning but about strengthening both body and mind. May this tournament be a journey of personal growth and respect for others. Cherish every moment to learn, improve, and connect with fellow judo-kas.

Thank you all for being part of this special day. I look forward to witnessing the passion and skill of each participant and to celebrating the spirit of judo that unites us all.

Thank you.

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