

Remarks by H.E. Mr. TAKEUCHI Kazuyuki
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia
On the Occasion of the 35th Japanese Ambassador's Judo Cup
23rd August 2025

- Guest of Honour, Mr. Alfred Foloko, Development Commitment Director of the International Judo Federation,
- Mr. Benjamin Tembo, Acting CEO of the OYDC Zambia Sports Development Centre,
- Mr. Dino Bianchi, Country Automotive CEO of CFAO Mobility Zambia / Toyota Zambia represented by Mr. Chidi Amadi, Marketing Manager,
- Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, and all the judokas,

It is both an honour and a pleasure to welcome you to the 35th Judo Japanese Ambassador's Cup here at OYDC today. I extend my gratitude to each and every one of you for your enthusiasm and commitment in joining this event.

Judo was developed by Mr. Kano Jigoro in the late 19th century in Japan. It teaches us values such as friendship, respect, perseverance, mutual welfare and self-defense. These principles are not only integral to the sport itself, but also serve as guiding lights in our daily lives. These principles have the power to unite people across nations and cultures, fostering peace and understanding.

For over 50 years, judo has served as a bridge connecting our two nations, Japan and Zambia. In 1970, six Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers 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. The sport has also spread to refugee resettlements such as Mayukwayukwa.

Today, we have gathered talented judokas not only from all over Zambia, but also from neighboring countries. Your presence here is a testament to judo's enduring appeal and its ability to inspire individuals to strive for excellence. It is heartening to see such a diverse group of judokas come together, united by their passion for this remarkable sport. I am delighted and honoured to witness the formation of new friendships and bonds through the sport.

It is important to remember that this competition is not solely about victories and defeats. It is an opportunity for personal growth, where you can challenge yourselves, learn from one another, and elevate your abilities to new heights. The true spirit of judo lies in the continuous pursuit of self-improvement and the development of a respectful and supportive community.

I would like to take a moment to express my appreciation to the Judo Association of Zambia, coaches, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this event possible. Your dedication and hard work are invaluable, and this tournament would not be a success without your efforts. Additionally, I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Dino Bianchi, Country Automotive CEO of CFAO Mobility Zambia / Toyota Zambia, for its continued generous sponsorship of this event.

To the judokas, I wish you the best of luck. Regardless of the outcomes, I hope this experience will be memorable and enriching. As you continue your judo journey, I encourage you to aim for greater heights and to carry forward the spirit of judo into all aspects of your lives.

In closing, I wish everyone an exciting and rewarding 2 days of competition. May the friendships forged here begin to grow and flourish, and may the spirit of judo guide you in all your future endeavors. I am truly honored to witness the amazing performances that will be displayed today.

Thank you for your attention.

(End)