
His Excellency Mr. Masaya Fujiwara
Ambassador of Japan to Jamaica
Speech at the Emperor's Birthday Reception
Tuesday February 23, 2021

[COURTESIES]

- 1. Senator the Honourable Kamina Johnson Smith**
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

- 2. Senator the Honourable Leslie Campbell**
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

- 3. Ambassador Sheila Sealy Monteith**
Permanent Secretary / Head of the Foreign Service

- 4. His Excellency Mr. Asif Ahmad**
British High Commissioner and Representative of the
Diplomatic Corps

5. His Excellency Mr. Michael Lodge

Secretary-General, International Seabed Authority

6. Mr. Christopher Samuda

President of the Jamaica Olympic Association

7. Mr. Shogo Otani

President of the Japanese Association & Senior Vice

President of Caribbean Operations, Marubeni

Corporation Limited

**8. Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen in
the Online Audience**

(1) I would like to express my profound gratitude to everyone in attendance at this evening's reception to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito of Japan. Today, the 23rd of February is the 61st birthday of

Emperor Naruhito who acceded to the Throne in May 2019 as the 126th Emperor of Japan. As I arrived in Jamaica last August, this is my first Emperor's Birthday Reception. This year, because of COVID-19, we celebrate this event with a restricted number of persons in accordance with the Government of Jamaica's protocols. Nevertheless, I appreciate that many persons are participating online.

(2) Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1964, the relationship between Jamaica and Japan is celebrating fifty-seven years this year. Both countries share basic common values such as freedom, democracy, and market economy, and we have been constructing good relations and collaborating on the issues of international society such as world peace and stability, the rule of law, and climate change. Specifically, in recent years, the first Japan-CARICOM Summit meeting was held in 2014 and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Jamaica in 2015 for the

first time as Prime Minister of Japan. Through these events, the relationship between Japan and Jamaica has matured to be called the J-J Partnership. There are also strong ties between people and people through the interchange of cultures, sports and youth, which constitute the basis of the solid political relationship. During my tenure as Ambassador in Jamaica, based on this strong friendship between our two countries, and following the guidance agreed on the occasion of the visit of Prime Minister Andrew Holness to Japan in 2019, I will do my best to further develop our relations especially in the economic and cultural fields towards the future.

(3) In 2020, the expansion of COVID-19 has drastically changed our lifestyle and the economies and societies in the world have been seriously affected. Today, I wish to mention three points as the future perspective of Japan-Jamaica relations as we are endeavouring to return to

normalcy after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Firstly, in our fight against COVID-19, various cooperation are going on in the medical area between Jamaica and Japan. Medical equipment and materials worth approximately USD\$ 2 million have now arrived in Jamaica and will soon be delivered, while last month, the signing ceremony was held at Mandeville Regional Hospital for the provision of an ambulance through the Grassroots Human Security Project, with the participation of Health and Wellness Minister Dr. Tufton and Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister Senator Kamina Johnson Smith. These cooperation correspond with the concept of human security and the SDGs philosophy of “no one will be left behind” which the Japanese government has been focusing on for many years. In the same way, we will contribute USD\$130 million to the COVAX facility to support the provision of COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries

including Jamaica.

Secondly, Japan and Jamaica, as similar island countries, share common issues such as being easily affected by natural disasters like hurricanes and torrential rain. Environmental protection and prevention of natural disasters will continue to be major areas of cooperation. The Japanese government will provide a nationwide digital radio communication system for disaster prevention through the grant of approximately USD\$13 million. Also, as Japan is accelerating green transformation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050, we will tackle the issue of the introduction of renewable energy, promotion of energy saving technology as well as the problem of plastic waste in the ocean. I believe, for sustainable Jamaican development, there is a lot of potential for collaboration using the technology and knowledge of Japanese private companies such as the plan for a logistics hub and digital

transformation, as we have been collaborating in the past, to develop Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee.

Thirdly, we will gradually resume people to people exchanges this year. As of now, under the JET programme which celebrated its 20th anniversary in Jamaica last year, some 400 Jamaicans have worked as English teachers in many places in Japan. They have played the role of private Ambassadors from Jamaica as well. The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) which were dispatched to Jamaica since 32 years ago have reached 450 volunteers in total. They have been contributing to the development of Jamaica in many areas, becoming integrated into communities all over Jamaica. We are preparing the visit of JET participants to Japan from April onwards, while we are under arrangement for the return to Jamaica of the JOCV.

(4) Finally, as all of you know, the Tokyo Olympics /

Paralympics which was postponed for one year will start on the 23rd of July. The Tokyo Olympics of 1964, first Olympic Games for Jamaica after its independence, was a symbol of reconstruction after WWII for Japan. This year's Tokyo Olympic Games has a special significance to demonstrate our resilience against the COVID pandemic, thus to give courage and hope to the people from all over the world. I hope that the Jamaican team wins many medals in the Tokyo as in previous Olympics and that the interchange between the two countries will expand further in many areas through this Olympic Games. Tottori Prefecture which is host town of the Jamaican team and sister city to Westmoreland will be the gateway to this itinerary.

The Tokyo Olympic Torch Relay will start on the 25th of March from Fukushima which was reconstructed after the devastating damage by tsunami, but hit again by recent earthquake. Every time after having suffered many

disasters, Jamaica and Japan have managed to “Build Back Better”. At this moment, while the world is striving to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the perspective that I mentioned, I will endeavour to make our J-J Partnership stronger and more resilient. Let us seize this opportunity to bounce back and move forward together for the construction of a better world.

I wish for you all good health and prosperity.

Thank you and good evening.

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