

**Remarks by Ambassador Kumamaru
at the Grand Opening Ceremony of
the Japan Foundation Asia Center Phnom Penh Liaison Office
(Thursday, May 5 2016)**

Your Excellency Dr. Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers and Madam Annie Sok An,

Your Excellency Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport,

Your Excellency Mrs. Phoeung Sakona, Minister of Culture and Fine Arts,

Mr. Tomoyuki Sakurai, Executive Vice-President of the Japan Foundation,

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your participation at this official opening of the Japan Foundation Asia Center Liaison Office in Cambodia. On this significant occasion, I would like, on behalf of the Government of Japan, to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Japan Foundation Asia Center.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the Royal Government of Cambodia, represented here today by H.E. Dr. Sok An and distinguished Ministers, for its strong and generous support during the preparations for the establishment of the Liaison Office.

With the recent and the rapid increase of Japanese citizens living in Cambodia and the development in the bilateral relations between Japan and Cambodia, we have, together, achieved significant progress in the fields of culture and sport, at both national level and grassroots levels, as well as facilitating many successful youth exchange programs.

In relation to cultural activities, the Japanese Embassy,

together with the Japan Foundation Asia Center and the Cambodian Japan Cooperation Center (CJCC), hosted the fifth Japan-Cambodia Kizuna Festival in February 2016. This event, which was inaugurated in the presence of H.E. Dr. Sok An, proved to be very popular with young Cambodians and attracted more than 18,000 people over the 4-day festival.

Increasing number of cultural events have also been organized in Cambodia by private Japanese companies, NGOs and other groups.

In terms of sport, the Embassy has also actively been supporting the spread of Japanese martial arts, such as Karate, Judo, Kendo and Aikido. In fact, in order to encourage people to take up these sports, we funded the construction of a new, two-storey building at the Olympic Stadium last December.

In addition, Japanese experts and volunteers, who have their eyes focussed on the SEA Games which are coming up in 2023, have been actively promoting sports in Cambodia. Sporting activities which Japanese experts and volunteers are supporting include soccer, canoe racing, volleyball, soft tennis, Aikido and Kendo.

I firmly believe that people's exchanges of all kinds will dramatically increase when the long-awaited, direct flights between Tokyo and Phnom Penh, to be operated by All Nippon Airways (ANA), start this September. In that sense, today's official opening of the Liaison Office is really timely.

Japan Foundation is an institution which plays the central role in cultural exchanges between Japan and other countries. I am confident that the presence of the Japan Foundation Asia Center Phnom Penh Liaison Office will greatly stimulate cultural exchange programs between Japan and Cambodia. The Embassy of Japan is keen to work together with the Liaison Office and is committed to supporting all the efforts and endeavors it will make for enhancing our bilateral relations.

Lastly, I wish the Japan Foundation Asia Center Phnom Penh Liaison Office every success in its noble task of deepening cultural understanding and promoting exchanges between our two nations.

Thank you.