

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Neliswa Nkonyeni on
the occasion of the reception by South African
Ambassador to Japan, His Excellency, Dr Ben
Ngubane at the Japanese Embassy**

17 July 2008

His Excellency, Ambassador, Dr Ben Ngubane and His wife

Your Excellencies, all Ambassadors present

Governors from various Prefectures

Honourable Members of the Diplomatic Corp

Honourable Hiramatsu, President of Oita OVOP

International Exchange Promotion Committee

Friends of the Ambassador

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol observed

I will start by expressing my personal gratitude to the people of Japan for again welcoming me and my delegation in the same warm manner that you displayed when we attended the International Congress of Nursing that was held in Yokohama City in May last year.

I also carry with me warm greetings from the Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Dr Sbusiso Ndebele who together with the Members of His Executive has on different occasions visited and accepted this beautiful and industrious country as a model for our Province's development and continue to regard it as an inspiration for advancement hence these study tours. We recognise that all this would not have been possible and practical had it not been for your spirit of deep and sincerest love for mankind as well as your loathing for the ever-growing suffering of the poor.

We thank you again for trusting and giving support to our lovable Ambassador, Dr Ben Ngubane in the four years that he has made sojourn to this far away land. To the ever innovative President of Oita OVOP Exchange Promotion Committee, Honourable Hiramatsu we are saying please let this good Dr be released after his tenure to go back and serve the people of KwaZulu Natal as I suspect that you may be sharing the same sentiments as the Governor of Oita Prefecture, Mr Katsusada HIROSE who yesterday did not hide His intentions to woe Dr Ngubane to continue working here as a Medical Practitioner.

You all know that as Africans, we come from the continent whose worse woes are exacerbated by the depletion of health professionals, a continent confronted with the increase burden of complex diseases including HIV and AIDS as well as Tuberculosis. A continent whose problems can be turned around if we embrace the good advice and ethics of progressive bodies like the Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA] whose Oath of Service clearly states that " *we will work as partners to those in need of assistance; and we will strive to fill the world with hope and happiness by promoting peace and sustainable development.* '

Today, as a Province of KwaZulu Natal in South Africa, we are saying we are ready to work with JICA and OVOP. We are saying, we are thankful that we have met and understood each other and that we are prepared for endogenous regional development aimed at:

- Realizing empowerment of communities
- Reducing poverty, and
- Ensuring human security

We will go back to our country knowing that we have found friends and partners that we can trust. Like the peoples of this country, we will be guided by **The Teaching of Buddha** that says:

I will not forget to hear the right teaching, for I know that when one neglects the right teaching one quickly falls away from truth that abides everywhere, and will fail to reach the shore of Enlightenment.

As a delegation representing various government departments, accompanied by the Hon Mayor of our country's deepest port, we are appreciative to all the people who put aside time to enlighten us about how they have got into the road of success. We will always be indebted to the hard working people of:

- YUZU plantation, processing and retailing farm
- Shiitake Mushroom Farm
- Oita Prefectural government Health Bureau
- Tokiha Industry, a farmers' mall bearing OVOP products
- Beppu-shi Bamboo hand craft centre

Over the weekend, we are going to leave this beautiful country of self-respecting and benevolent people; wiser having been imbued with knowledge and experiences that will ultimately enhance the improvement of our own people.