

**Speech by His Excellency Mr. KANO Takehiro
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Delegate of Japan to UNESCO
at the GEM Event (Monday, November 24, 2025)**

H.E. Ms Irina Bokova, the 10th Director-General of UNESCO

H.E.Mr. Alaa Youssef, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of
Egypt to UNESCO,

Mr Ernesto Ottone, Assistant Director-General Culture of UNESCO,

Dr Ahmad Ghoneim, Director Executive of the Grand Egyptian
Museum,

Ms. Sonia Ramzi, President of International Association Friends of
Egyptian Heritage Museums Worldwide,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening.

It is my great honor to speak here today.

On behalf of the Government of Japan, allow me to express warmest congratulations to the long-awaited opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), the world's largest museum dedicated to a single civilization, on 1st November. The ceremony in Cairo was attended from Japan by Her Imperial Highness Princess Akiko of Mikasa, Prime Minister TAKAICHI Sanae's special envoy, Vice Foreign Minister Ms KUNIMITSU Ayano, Mr TANAKA Akihiko President of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which supported this project, and Governor of Tokyo Ms KOIKE Yuriko who is Arabic speaker and a longtime friend of Egypt. The attendance

shows how much Japan is excited nationwide about the great news.

Japan has a large number of dedicated Egyptologists and loyal fans of Egyptian civilization. On a personal note, in January this year, I myself visited Luxor and Cairo with my family, and in Cairo, we had the pleasure of visiting GEM with Ambassador Youssef and his family. I also visited an old archaeological museum to see the Golden Masks and treasures of Tutankhamun which are now transported to GEM, and you can see them in better setting. In planning my trip, I had the privilege of getting good advice from Professor Khaled El-Enany, now the newly appointed Director-General of UNESCO. Double congratulations to Egypt for the inauguration of GEM and the installation of new DG.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are proud that Japan has been a partner with Egypt on the signature project of GEM for more than 20 years. The initiative was launched during the visit of then Japanese Prime Minister KOIZUMI Junichiro to Egypt in 2003, when the war in Iraq was shaking the region and the whole world. Since then, there were many challenges facing Egypt, political, economic and social, but Japan's commitment to partnering with Egypt on this project was steadfast. We have offered a wide range of supports through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), including concessional loans of about 580 million USD covering more than half of the total construction cost, as well as technical cooperation involving more than 120 Japanese

experts and 2000 Egyptians in every aspect of the museum. That includes transportation, preservation and restoration of precious artifacts, establishment of an archaeological database, and museum management in general.

One concrete example of cooperation is the restoration of the Second Solar Boat of King Khufu, one of GEM's major exhibits. Professor Yoshimura Sakuji, a renowned Japanese Egyptologist who worked with Egypt for nearly 60 years, has led the project begun in 2013, which consists of recovering approximately 1,700 wooden components, conserving and restoring them, and then reconstructing the original form of the boat. The project is still ongoing, and visitors are able to observe it at the museum.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The GEM project presents a good example of interconnection between development and culture, which is quite pertinent to the discussion at UNESCO today.

Mobilizing a large scale of development resources for cultural projects are not so common. Between Japan and Egypt, there is another well known successful case of constructing Opera House in 1980s. But most other projects are economic and social infrastructure or human resources development, in such sectors as agriculture, transport, power, health, education and so on.

Culture still tends to be seen as luxuries, only for the upper echelon of the people, and so being remote from development and

the majority of the people. But culture should be the core in development.

Culture can have direct positive impact on development, as cultural heritage can help enhance tourism, bringing tangible economic benefits for the people. But there is more than that.

Culture provides people with self respect and dignity, which is the driving force of sustainable development. Only with self respect and dignity, people wish to help themselves even in challenging circumstances. That is why the international community, led by UNESCO, has supported restoring Angkor Watt in Cambodia, Bamiyan in Afghanistan, and has been doing the same in Iraq, Ukraine, Gaza, Syria and so on. Japan has supported such UNESCO's initiatives.

Thus, culture should be highlighted more in the post-2030 development agenda, as has been discussed in MONDIACULT of UNESCO. And wise investment in culture can have positive developmental impact.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, let me express again deep respect to all those who worked for GEM, Egyptian, Japanese, or people of any other nationalities, to the successful completion. This is the great contribution to human civilization, as well as pioneering and inspiring model for development cooperation in culture.

Thank you for your attention.