

Opening Remarks by Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki
at the Judo Dojo Inauguration Ceremony
(October 9, 2021)

His Excellency Dr. Tandi Dorji, Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Mr. Karma Dorji, President of the Bhutan Judo Association,

Mr. Haruki Uemura, President of the Kodokan,

Mr. Yasuhiro Yamashita, President of the All Japan Judo Federation,

Ambassador Gotaro Ogawa, Special Advisor to the All Japan Judo Federation,

Mr. Soya Nakazato, Senior Managing Director of the All Japan Judo Federation,

Mr. Shunsuke Yamasaki, Professor of the Konan University,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

སྐུ་གཟུགས་བཟང་པོ་ལགས། (Kuzu Zangpo La).

I am truly delighted to join you in the inauguration ceremony today, although virtually from Delhi due to COVID-19 protocol. “The Judo Dojo Construction Project” is the first-ever project under Japan's Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects in Bhutan. The grant contract was officially signed in December

2018. I am pleased that in less than three years, the Dojo has been completed and we are celebrating the inauguration today.

This Judo Dojo is expected to serve as the center for making Judo more popular among Bhutanese school students as well as to help improve the ability and proficiency of Bhutanese Judoka by inviting foreign Judoka to the Judo Dojo that meets an international standard.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Dorji, President of the Bhutan Judo Association, and all the officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan who have worked hard to successfully complete this project in July this year, even though the construction period was extended twice due to the COVID-19 lockdown in India and the closure of the border with Bhutan.

The development of Judo in Bhutan has been realized under the strong leadership of His Majesty the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. We know that His Majesty the King has had a keen interest in Judo since he was Crown Prince, and has promoted this sport based on his belief that discipline and non-aggressive nature of Judo is well suited to the traditional Bhutanese culture. Judo is beneficial not only to physical training but also to the mental development, as stated in the Kodokan's principles of "Seiryoku

Zen-you (精力善用) or Maximum efficiency" and "Jita Kyou-ei (自他共栄) or Mutual welfare and benefit.”

In 2011, Their Majesties the King and the Queen visited the Kodokan when they paid a State Visit to Japan as the first foreign Head of State after the Great East-Japan Earthquakes. In his address at the Japanese Parliament, His Majesty stated "No citizen, nation or people should ever have to experience such suffering. And yet if there is one nation that can rise stronger and greater from such adversity – it is Japan and her people. Of this I am confident.” During their stay in Japan, Their Majesties took time to visit Fukushima Prefecture to encourage local people, particularly children, in the disaster-affected areas. This was the very moment we Japanese people were deeply moved by Their Majesties’ heart-warming consideration to us and we were truly grateful for it. The visit of Their Majesties have built a big bridge of friendship between our two peoples. Recalling the thoughtfulness and compassion Their Majesties kindly showed in Japan ten years ago, today I am very much pleased that we have been able to build another bridge for further strengthening the bond between our two peoples through Judo.

Judo in Bhutan has achieved remarkable results under the guidance of His Majesty the King and the contributions made by

the Bhutan Judo Association since 2010. I am impressed that three Bhutanese Judoka won bronze medals at the South Asian Games 2019, and three athletes participated in the World Judo Championships in Tokyo 2019. In particular, I would like to commend Mr. NGAWANG Namgyel, who is a South Asian Games medalist and one of the participating athletes to the recently concluded Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, as well as Japanese coaches of BJA.

Today's ceremony would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts by Mr. Karma Dorji, President of the Bhutan Judo Association, Mr. Haruki Uemura, President of the Kodokan and Mr. Soya Nakazato, Senior Managing Director of the All Japan Judo Federation as well as all the Bhutanese national coaches and those who have contributed to the development of Judo in Bhutan. I would reiterate my sincere gratitude and pay my deep respect to all the people concerned who have devoted themselves to forging the foundation of the Judo development in Bhutan.

Let me conclude my remarks by expressing strong hope that this Judo Dojo will contribute to the further expansion of Judo in Bhutan as well as to the further promotion of our friendship.

Thank you. བཀྲིས་བདེ་ལེགས། (Tashi Delek).