

**REMARKS BY H.E. MR. KIYOSHI KOINUMA, AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO
THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF
GRANT AID WITH THE NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF ZAMBIA FOR
THE PROJECT FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SPORTS FACILITIES OF THE
NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF ZAMBIA, EMBASSY OF JAPAN,
21st JANUARY, 2014**

Mrs. Miriam Moyo, President, National Olympic Committee of Zambia,
Members of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here today, representing the Government of Japan at this signing ceremony for Grass Roots Cultural Grant Aid.

Today, the Government of Japan has agreed to provide Cultural Grant Aid amounting to One Hundred Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty nine United States Dollars (USD100,829) which is approximately equivalent to Five Hundred and Fifty Five Thousand Kwacha, to the National Olympic Committee of Zambia to improve the sports facilities in Lusaka.

This Project started in 2012 when the Embassy of Japan granted about One Hundred Thousand Dollars in response to the National Olympic Committee's request to construct an athletic field, a soccer court, a tennis court and a netball court. I have been told that annually about twenty five thousand children are using the facility named "YAMATO-Field".

In Phase 2 of the Project, the Grant will be used specifically for the construction of a hockey court, a basketball court and a volleyball court, expanding the range of sports activities in Zambia. The overall intentions of the Project are to identify sporting talent among the youth and to foster international sport leaders, as well as

to ensure sound upbringing of children by providing ordinary citizens, especially underprivileged youths with a safe sport facility.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please let me remind you that Zambia's Olympic history is deeply connected to that of Japan. As some of you might know, Japan hosted the 1964 Olympics which ran from October 10th to 24th. At the opening ceremony of the Olympics, the participants prior to Zambia's independence entered the stadium, hoisting the Northern Rhodesia flag. Then, on 24th October 1964, the very day of Zambia's independence, the closing ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics was held at Tokyo National Stadium. The world watched on television the Zambian athletes proudly marching in the stadium, hoisting the new national flag of the Republic of Zambia. That moment remains one of the most memorable occasions in Japan's and Zambia's Olympic history. Last year, Tokyo was selected to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I believe this Project will contribute to promoting sport and fostering future promising Olympic athletes from Zambia. It is my sincere hope that in 2020, many athletes can represent Zambia at the Tokyo Olympic Games, and their performance will make great impact to people throughout the world over by showing the inherent power of sport to realize dreams, hope and aspirations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I would like to refer to the name given to the facility, "YAMATO-Fields". Yamato is an old Japanese word used to refer to the earliest ancient regime. In this regard, Yamato is synonymous with Japan as a nation. At the same time, when we look at the Chinese characters which comprise the word "Yamato", it can be interpreted as "great harmony". In the context of this Project, the word is a reflection of the enduring spirit of cordial relations, mutual trust and

harmony existing between Japan and Zambia, as well as the desire for the further enhancement of these harmonious relations.

It is my sincere hope that the provision of access to sporting activities for the vulnerable underprivileged youths will keep them mentally healthy and fit into society. In turn, this will help children to grow up into good citizens capable of contributing to social and economic development of Zambia. In addition, I am certain that this project will strengthen further the goodwill and harmony existing between the people of Japan and the people of Zambia.

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