

Remarks by H. E. Mr Akio EGAWA, Ambassador of Japan to Zambia and
Special Representative of Japan to COMESA,
at the Occasion of Presentation of His Credentials

H.E. Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, Secretary- General of COMESA,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an utmost pleasure and honour for me today to present my credentials to you, Secretary General, as Special Representative of Japan to COMESA. Please allow me to extend my sincere gratitude to all of you for sparing your precious time for the presentation, especially during the ongoing Policy Organs Meetings.

Japan attaches particular importance to the relationship with COMESA, which covers the largest number of countries, areas, and population among Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa. Indeed, COMESA is one of the major strategic partners for Japan, since COMESA and Japan share the policy priorities towards social and economic development through economic growth in the region. It is from this point of view that the Government of Japan appointed Ambassador Mitamura, my predecessor, as the first Special Representative to COMESA in June last year, and I am succeeding him in the same capacity.

Japan has continued cooperating with COMESA on a number of projects, most notably with the establishment of the One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) as well as infrastructure development. Regarding the OSBP, the Chirundu OSBP was opened in December last year with Japan's technical assistance as well as related financial aid and is facilitating the smoother movement of goods and persons in the region. Japan has intention to expand its assistance to other OSBPs as well, in order to contribute to the economic integration of COMESA, and to establishment of the proposed tripartite FTA by COMESA-EAC-SADC.

From this point of view, I would most welcome initiatives aimed at enhancing policy dialogue between my embassy and the COMESA Secretariat, so that Japan's assistance for COMESA would be more aligned to the regional priorities, which COMESA coordinates.

As you might be aware, during the visit of H. E. Mr Jean Ping, the Chairperson of the Commission of African Union, to Japan in August this year, the Government of Japan and AU Commission issued a joint communiqué. The communiqué states, among others, that Japan will seek to further strengthen its cooperation with RECs. Bearing this in mind, I am more than ready to work with you and your colleagues for the further enhancement of cooperation between Japan and COMESA. I would be most grateful if you could extend your kind assistance to me in this regard.

Thank you.

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