

25 November 2016

Statement of Mr. Hidenobu Sobahsima, Ambassador of Japan
at the Reception to Celebrate the Birthday of the Emperor of Japan

The Hon. Matthew Nkhuwa, Minister of Works and Supply, Guest of Honour,
The Hon. Given Lubinda, Minister of Justice,
Officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia present here,
Your Excellency Mr. Attalla Qubia, Ambassador of Palestine, and Dean of the
Diplomatic Corps and Other Ambassadors and High Commissioners present
here,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome you all present here this evening to
a reception to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty The Emperor of Japan.

The Emperor will be 83 years old on the 23rd of December.

Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan visited Zambia in 1983
as Crown Prince and Princess then, followed by the visits of Their Imperial
Highnesses Prince and Princess Takamado in 1999, and of Their Imperial
Highnesses Prince and Princess Akishino in 2014 to commemorate the 50th
anniversary of the diplomatic relations of our two countries.

These imperial visits to Zambia, among other high-level visits between our
two countries, including those of former Presidents of the Republic of Zambia
to Japan, underpin our strong friendly relationship.

Zambia, ever since its independence in 1964, has upheld the principle of
“One Zambia, One Nation”, to maintain its solidarity and stability, and
developed its economy. Last August “General Election 2016” was held orderly
in a generally peaceful environment, which attracted the appreciation of the
international community. Japan admires such commendable achievements of
Zambia.

I would like to refrain from reflecting the long history of development of friendly and cooperative relationship between Zambia and Japan since 1964, as we don't have time to do so now.

Over the last 12 months, we have witnessed high level exchanges between our two countries, including the visit of Mr. Hitoshi Kikawada, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan to Zambia in December last year, the participation of 5 Japanese MPs headed by the Hon. Shunichi Suzuki, former Minister of the Environment of Japan and a member of the Executive Committee of the IPU in the 134th IPU Assembly held in Lusaka last March, and the visit of Mr. Toshitaka Ooka, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Finance of Japan to attend the 2016 Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank held in Lusaka last May.

At TICAD VI held in Nairobi, Kenya last August, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan announced various initiatives to advance its relations with Africa, including the investment amounting to US\$ 30 billion. We intend to faithfully implement these initiatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With respect to ODA to Zambia, Japan prioritizes the following three areas, namely, (1) vitalization of the industries, (2) development of the economic infrastructure, and (3) improvement of the social infrastructure.

(1) As for the vitalization of the industries, as the Government of Zambia attaches importance to diversification of the Zambian economy as a top priority issue, development of agriculture should receive a central focus. Japan's cooperation in this regard is under way by implementing the rice dissemination project, and the irrigation project for small farmers, utilizing its experience and technology, among other cooperation.

Today we have prepared sushi made of Koshihikari, a top quality Japanese rice, over there. Please enjoy it later.

We are glad that the Kaizen project, adopting the work ethics of Japan, has taken root here in Zambia, as its second phase will commence next year.

We hope that this project will help strengthen the competitiveness of Zambian industries.

(2) With respect to the economic infrastructure, we will continue to consider and implement, when appropriate, projects in the transportation and electricity sectors, among other cooperation.

(3) In relation to the improvement of the social infrastructure, I would like to mention our cooperation in the fields of water, health, education, sports, and culture.

As for water resources, Japan has already assisted construction of more than 2000 wells throughout Zambia. Phase 3 of the Project for Ground Water Development in Luapula Province commenced in 2008 was completed last August. This project alone will provide safe and clean water to about 180 thousand people.

As for health, Japan supported upgrading of the health centres at Matero and Chilenje to the first level hospitals by completing constructing their facilities and providing necessary equipment there last August. Japan undertakes many other projects in the health field, particularly with a view to promoting universal health coverage.

As for education, we have started the third phase of the Grant Aid for Poverty Reduction Strategy in Education Sector this year. The Grants extended in three phases total 900 million yen, and cover schools all over the country.

As for sports, our Embassy hosts Judo and Karate tournaments every year, this year in June and August. We were glad that a Zambian Judo athlete performed well in the Rio Olympic Games. As Karate has been adopted as one of the new games to be introduced in the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020, we hope that Zambian athletes will achieve good results in Judo and Karate in Tokyo, among other games.

The Embassy hosts the Japan Day and the Japanese Film Festival every

year, this year in September. I believe that these will help deepen understanding by Zambians of Japan and at the same time will help enrich the culture and society of Zambia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With respect to the so-called technical cooperation, currently the number of the Japanese experts advising the Government of Zambia and that of the Japanese volunteers engaged with the grassroots level cooperation total about 100, and they are stationed throughout this country for the cooperation in various fields.

Currently Japan receives around 150 trainees from Zambia every year.

A number of Japanese NGOs are also engaged with development cooperation, wishing for well-being of Zambian people.

I am proud of such an extensive level of the people to people exchanges and cooperation under way now, between our two countries.

Now I would like to mention the activities of the Japanese companies here in Zambia.

Japanese companies are growing tobacco leaves and guar beans, among other products, engaging a number of Zambian farmers, generating their incomes.

Some companies have expanded the bases of their business in Zambia.

Some companies are building new factories or renovating existing factories.

A number of donations have been made as part of their corporate social responsibility activities, to hospitals and schools, among other undertakings.

While appreciating all these, I encourage further investments by Japanese companies to benefit both Zambia and Japan.

A delegation from Japan to prepare for the Zambia-Japan Public-Private Conference for High-Quality Infrastructure to be held in January next year, is currently in town. In fact the members of the preparatory delegation are present here now. I hope that, with their good preparation, the January Infrastructure Conference will bear a good fruit.

Today Japanese companies have exhibited their renowned automobiles and displays explaining their cutting-edge products, over there. Please have a look later, if you haven't yet.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having said all these, as Ambassador of Japan to Zambia, I am determined to do my best, building upon the long-standing cooperative relations between Japan and Zambia extending from political and economic to cultural and other areas, and in cooperation with the Japanese experts, volunteers, NGOs and companies in Zambia - many of them are present here - , to advance our bilateral relations in such fields as ODA, trade and investment, particularly by implementing the TICAD VI initiatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, while wishing for further development of the friendly and cordial relationship existing between Japan and Zambia and for the good health and happiness of all present here, I would like to propose a toast to H.E. Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia for His Excellency's continued good health and leadership.

To the President!