

**Statement of Mr. Hidenobu Sobashima, Ambassador of Japan to the
Republic of Zambia at 2018 National KAIZEN Conference
on Thursday 15 February 2018**

Ms. Kayula Siame, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of the Republic of Zambia,

Mr. Chola Mwitwa, CEO, KAIZEN Institute of Zambia,

Mr. Junichi Hanai, Chef Representative, JICA Office, Zambia,

Senior Government Officials,

Representatives from the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour and pleasure to deliver a statement at 2018 National KAIZEN Conference with the theme of “Transforming Zambia through Continuous Improvement towards International Competitiveness”.

At the outset, I would like to join the organizers of this Conference, particularly in welcoming the KAIZEN performers who, I understand, are 13 organizations, including 8 manufacturing companies, and their members, as they are expected to play a leading role in adding values to Zambia’s economic growth and development.

(Zambian Economy)

The Guest of Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Zambia, upholding “Vision 2030”, aims to become a prosperous middle income country by 2030.

For this purpose, the Government is promoting the diversification of the Zambian economy which is currently heavily dependent on the mining industry.

Agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, among others, are identified as the sectors with large potentials for growth.

Diversifying the mining industry itself is also under consideration.

“Smart Zambia”, based on innovative methods, is also pursued.

At the same time, the Government attaches importance to healthy budgetary

management and consulting the IMF.

We admire these efforts of the Government of the Republic of Zambia, and we would like to support these efforts for Zambia to become a prosperous middle income country.

For this purpose, I believe that KAIZEN Project of quality and productivity improvement leading to international competitiveness, among other undertakings, will play a very important role.

Before going into some details of KAIZEN Project in Zambia, let me review the history of the Japanese economic development, as KAIZEN Project is a project of work ethics based on Japanese experience.

(Japanese Economic Development)

The Guest of Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Japan lacks natural resources, it depended on the hard work of its people for its development.

Simply put, we imported raw materials and parts for products and with these we made final products and exported them to gain incomes, and became a major economy in the world.

The education and the good relationship between the employers and the employees which facilitated development of KAIZEN activities, among others, played important roles in this process.

Japan achieved a rapid economic growth until the early 1990's, including more than doubling its national income from 1961 to 1970, and became the world's second largest economy.

One example of innovation in Japan in this period is the development of transistor radio devices from around 1955 to 1970's, and then many Japanese electric appliance manufactures produced portable transistor radio receivers and exported them worldwide.

Hard work and resultant quality and technological innovations worked well then.

Japan is now the third largest economy in the world after the United States and China, and struggling to grow again, coping with the problems of the rapidly aging population due to the decreased birth rate and the prolonged life expectancy, among other challenges.

The Abe Government promotes “Abenomics” of aggressive monetary policy, flexible fiscal policy and structural reforms, including various innovations, to get out of the deflation and achieve growth.

I am optimistic about Japan’s future because, a huge number of Japanese companies are undertaking some form of KAIZEN activities, and positive signs of innovations are found in Japan.

For example, Japan is now the most advanced country in the field of energy efficiency and using the resources sparingly with consideration to the environment.

Here the motto is “reduce, reuse and recycle” the resources.

Until last year, 26 Japanese, including of those who had obtained the citizenship of foreign countries, received the Nobel Prizes, and the majority of them are scientists.

For the recent three years from 2014 to 2016, a total of 6 Japanese scientists received the Nobel Prizes every year.

I hope that Japan will achieve growth again overcoming the difficulties it faces now, by efficient work and quality resulting from KAIZEN activities and innovations.

(KAIZEN in Zambia)

The Guest of Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen,

TICAD VI held in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 2016, attached importance to the KAIZEN Initiative, among other initiatives, to create “Quality Africa”, among other priority issues.

National KAIZEN Project (Phase I) was implemented in Zambia from February 2014 to December 2016.

The Government of the Republic of Zambia established KAIZEN Institute of Zambia (KiZ), and KiZ, with the cooperation from JICA, trained 16 KAIZEN consultants and 44 KAIZEN coordinators, and assisted KAIZEN activities of a total of 77 organizations in both the public and private sectors, among other KAIZEN activities.

I understand that to date more than 1,000 Zambians in more than 160 teams participated in KAIZEN activities.

Since July 2017, National KAIZEN Project Phase II is under way, for all Provinces of Zambia, for strengthening management capacity of KiZ,

strengthening training systems of KAIZEN consultants, providing KAIZEN consulting services, and spreading the KAIZEN movement nationwide, and thus continuously developing the foundation for KAIZEN dissemination and expansion and contributing to the improvements of quality and productivity in both the public and private sectors in Zambia.

Through the implementation of this Project, we hope that not only the individuals who experienced the KAIZEN training, but also their teams, and indeed their organizations as a whole will benefit and improve their competitiveness, and the number of such beneficiaries will increase drastically, throughout Zambia.

Today I look forward to the reports of those who are doing KAIZEN activities.

(Conclusion)

The Guest of Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate that for Zambia to become a prosperous middle income country, producing good and abundant results of KAIZEN activities is essential.

As I mentioned earlier, we have confirmed progress made through National KAIZEN Project Phase I.

Congratulations!

However, further progress is hoped for to achieve “Vision 2030”.

I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to encourage all parties concerned, including KiZ, and those participating in National KAIZEN Project Phase II in both the public and private sectors of Zambia to make their utmost efforts to achieve the best results, in their own places, and also, if possible, to influence the neighbors of their reach to do so as well, so that the KAIZEN movement will spread as widely as possible in Zambia.

To this end, the Government of Japan is determined to offer its utmost cooperation through JICA.

Let us all work together for Zambia to become a prosperous middle income country!

Thank you.