

Keynote Statement of Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador of Japan to the
Republic of Zambia at the Annual Assembly of Japan Scholars at the
Ambassador's Residence on 5 February 2020

Hon. Brian Mushimba, Minister of Higher Education of the Republic of Zambia,
Prof. Luke Mumba, Vice-Chancellor, University of Zambia,
Prof. Junji Nishii, Vice-President, Hokkaido University,
Prof. Masiye Felix, Dean, School of humanities and Social Sciences,
Prof. King Nalubamba, Dean, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of
Zambia,
Prof. Masahiro Okumura, Director, Africa Office in Lusaka, Hokkaido University,
Dr. Michelo Syakalima, Senior Lecturer, School of Veterinary Medicine,
University of Zambia, and Acting President of Japan Scholars Association,
<VIPs in this room>
Senior Government Officials,
Representatives of the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to host the 2020 Annual Assembly of Japan Scholars Association here in my Residence for the first time as Japanese Ambassador to Zambia this evening. I would like to extend to almost all of you my sincere “welcome back in Japan”.

At the outset, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Honorable Brian Mushimba, Minister of Higher Education, for being with us for the second time in two days. He was namely at our “Japan Brand Program” yesterday at the Intercontinental Hotel Lusaka and delivered on behalf of the Zambian Government a very warm speech. I take this opportunity to report to him that thanks to his passionate speech emphasizing the need to intensify cooperation with Japan in the field of space science, the resonance of the audience during and after the lecture was extremely high. Once again, I would like to thank Hon. Minister for this success.

I am aware it is a rare case that the same Minister comes to the Ambassador's Residence already the next day, even if it was planned in advance. Therefore, I feel particularly honored that the Minister graces our Annual Assembly as he does today. Since it will be my turn to make an official call on him as new Ambassador, I am looking forward to visiting the office of the Honorable Minister

as soon as possible.

Now, on a very exceptional basis, I would like our staff to serve you a glass of Sake, or otherwise soft drink for those who do not wish to drink alcohol. I was requested by former scholarship students to Japan to cheer them up in order for them to be reasonably encouraged (or intoxicated) to refresh the Japanese language at least to the level that they were used to speaking in Izakaya-Bars in Japan.

<wait for the glasses to be served and KAMPAI for the first round>

I have served in many countries, but never have I seen such a big number of former scholarship students gathered like this, although I asked my colleague to add to that former JICA trainees and some former ABE-initiative students. I am also happy to welcome two new scholarship students from Zambia to Japan whose application was successfully approved recently, namely Ms. Ireen James & Mr. Wisdom Chilufya. (Congratulations).

It is a great pleasure to see that those who studied in Japan or were trained in Japan come back to Zambia and are holding high offices in administration or academia respectively – or on their way. You are the ample proof that the exchanges in the higher education between Japan and Zambia have been bearing a lot of fruit. I wish to express my sincere appreciation for your tireless efforts to upgrade your own academic, administrative and technical expertise, and to brush up your quality as a person. It is my sincere hope that you will continue to work hard to serve for Zambia and its sustainable development – and, as those who know the both cultures well, contribute to further enhancing the friendly relations between our two countries.

Let me take this opportunity to tell you something that has come to my awareness in the last four months while serving in Zambia, namely:

It is true that the cooperation between Japan and Zambia has been extended in quite a number of fields – infrastructure building, health care, agriculture, energy, human resources development, etc. However, if you take a closer look, you will still find a lot of potentials. For example:

Since the establishment of the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Zambia in the early 1980's, the cooperation between UNZA and Hokkaido University has not only been deepened – namely been developed vertically. It has expanded horizontally to become increasingly interdisciplinary. In the recent joint cooperation within the framework of SATREPS, we have seen examples of research in the field of zoonosis, or research to explore the causes of soil pollution

in Kafue due to lead contamination and to find a solution to that problem. The latter includes methods in the field of remote sensing, environmental protection or social sciences in the sense of social awareness of impacts on communities including children – a wide range of areas that are not solely restricted to one discipline, namely Vet-Medicine. This is a good example of diversification and deserves an attention.

On a similar note, the School of Humanities took a respectful initiative. Efforts on the side of UNZA, the Embassy of Japan and Hokkaido University have led to the launching of the Japanese Language Courses at UNZA. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Dean of School of Humanities, Prof. Masiye Felix and Dr. Ngalande, as well as Prof. Nishii of Hokudai for their efforts. This is another important development. It now serves as a basis in UNZA to awaken interest of young students for Japan and their motivation to study in Japan.

Now, I am wondering if these two developments can go hand in hand together, for instance:

While the exchanges on the level of post-graduate level has been steadily expanded between Japan and Zambia, one clear missing link is the exchanges on the graduate – namely faculty or bachelor level. The biggest challenge in this regard is the level of the Japanese language for the applying for scholarship. This must be duly addressed so that the linguistic level of applicants will be increased. The first JICA volunteer Japanese teacher is a small but important step in this direction. But this must be continued and further strengthened by many supportive measures.

In terms of the horizontal expansion, I am pleased to hear that Hokkaido University, in particular the researchers and young academics, is very much supportive of such development. This provides us with an opportunity to open a door for scholars in many different fields to exchanges with each other. Chances that guest lectures – for example in economy, law and other social sciences, culture or literature and other humanity sciences – will be given, will certainly increase.

In tandem with the development in terms of TICAD which has awakened much interest of Japanese people including business toward Africa, there are initiatives taken by science and technology institutions to seek deeper cooperation with Africa. JST, for example, launched a joint funding (AJ-CORE) this year for Southern African countries in cooperation with National Research Foundation of South Africa in the field of environmental science. JSPS will launch an

Inter-University Exchange Project shortly, and I was told that Africa will be the main target. Individual universities are more and more interested in academic exchanges with counterparts in African countries. Here in Zambia, there are exchange students from newcomer universities like Hiroshima, Kagoshima, Soka, and others. Given such a trend, Zambia should not be late for that.

What, then, will be critical to take the chance?

From what I have learnt from my experience in Germany, in many universities, the Faculty for Japan Studies (Japanology) is usually serving as a basis for exchanges with Japanese universities. However, in other cases, the universities nominate a person to take charge of Japan – so to speak an Academic Ambassador to Japan. I know two such cases, namely Cologne and Essen. They are the contact points to seek and expand academic and other exchanges with Japanese counterparts. In the case of Essen, my good friend Medical Prof. Wolfgang Sauerwein has taken the lead to start cooperation with a hospital in Fukushima in the field of handling cancer with special boron and neutron technology.

Therefore, an idea to launch a “Japan Academic Center” at UNZA with a newly nominated “Academic Ambassador for Japan” may deserve consideration. In the initial phase, I would call it the “virtual” Japan Center. As it evolves to have some substance and shape, people can make it a “real” Japan Center.

When I paid a call on H.E. President Lungu and asked his views on that, he gave me a short answer, just in two words – namely “why not”. President Lungu encouraged me to pursue this idea and talk with Hon. Minister of Higher Education and the Chancellor of UNZA.

Honorable Minister, among many issues that Japan and Zambia will face in the field of academia, science and technology including the space, I would like to deepen exchanges with you on this issue and hope I will receive your support. Dear Members of UNZA, I hope very much that the university will render support for such development in the broader context, namely the deepening of relations between Japanese and Zambian academic institutions, as well as Japan Academic Center in particular.

Dear Members of Hokudai, JICA and other institution of Japan, I hope I will receive support from you all in many fields to make this dream come true.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to propose a toast for the sake of deepening exchanges in higher exchanges between Japan and Zambia. Thank you for your attention.