

2020 National KAIZEN Conference
Friday, 21 February 2020
Speech by H. E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta,
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia

Honourable Mr. Christopher Yaluma, Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry,
Mr. Mushuma Mulenga, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry,

Mr. Chola Abel Mwitwa, Chief Executive Officer, Kaizen Institute of Zambia

Mr. MATSUMURA Motohiro, Deputy Country Representative, JICA Office in Zambia,

Mr. INUI Eiji, Senior Advisor to NEPAD Chief Executive Officer,

Ms. Radha Nair, Business Excellence Resource Person from Singapore,

Teams practicing Kaizen activities,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Chola Mwitwa, CEO of the KAIZEN institute, for inviting me to the 2020 National KAIZEN Conference here at the Mulungushi International Center Lusaka – an important occasion to review the KAIZEN activities of the past year and select the outstanding teams, which will represent Zambia in an international competition to be held later this year.

I also wish to acknowledge the presence of Hon. Christopher Yaluma, Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry, with whom I had an opportunity yesterday for an intensive exchange of views on the promotion of investment and trade between Japan and Zambia. I was very much encouraged by Hon. Yaluma's desire to create suitable conditions for that, including ways to accelerate the negotiation for an investment agreement between our two countries.

Now, in starting my remarks, I wish to extend my congratulations to the 30 teams who have made their way to today's Conference, and in particular, those of Universal Mining & Chemical Industries Ltd and Strong Pack. They are the ones who received Gold Award at the International Convention on Quality Controls

Circles held in Tokyo last September for the second time in a row as participants from Africa. I hope very much that their achievements will be repeated by this year's candidates who will be chosen as a result of today's presentation – and will prove to be an auspicious forecast for the performances of the Zambian Olympic team who will participate in the forthcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games 2020. This would perfectly provide the trademark “Proudly Zambian” with a charm necessary to compete on the global market.

Earlier this week, I had the honor to visit the Headquarters of the KAIZEN institute in downtown Lusaka. It was quite impressive to see how the concept of KAIZEN was translated into local languages. Its offices were so neatly kept in order with transparent workplans and goals, I truly felt like sending at least some of my staff to the Institute to have them decently trained so that they will also improve their outputs. And I totally agreed with Mr. Mwitwa when he said; “To improve the performance of the Zambian industry, people should not shy away from challenging the status quo”. It is, indeed, this spirit to challenge the status quo that is eagerly needed for the Zambian business and industry today. Therefore, I am very excited to see what kind of innovative KAIZEN methods will be presented by the participating teams in today's Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish, however, to point out one more thing in this context. That is to say – I am starting to wonder if “KAIZEN” alone can remain the guiding principles for the industry and business to survive the competition on the domestic and global market today. I say this because the business circumstances themselves are changing and new technologies and applications are emerging almost on a daily basis. For example, telecommunication is no longer the branch that we used to know 5 years ago. While Wi-Fi providers in Lusaka are campaigning 4G internet to win new clients, the others are entering or have already entered the era of 5G.

Artificial intelligence has also become indispensable for maintaining the standard of living in a modern society – particularly with regard to what we call the “Society 5.0”. In Africa, even where the infrastructure is generally lagging, suddenly a new business model can emerge and be a game changer. Look at the situation in Rwanda, for instance. This development, or phenomena that people call “frog-

leaping” have changed the image of the African Continent. Zambians are thus facing the challenge in the double sense. While the macroeconomy itself has to recover from the current difficulties and the public sector get rid of the classical inefficiency and bureaucracy, individual companies in private business are called upon to live with and swallow the new reality both regionally and globally.

I hope very much that from the teams that are represented today, brilliant ideas that not only embody the concept of KAIZEN but are inclusive of adapting to the emerging circumstances will be presented. One week ago, I visited the Western Province and stayed one night at a lodge. In the surrounding of the housing complex I saw signs of warning “Danger! Venomous snakes!”

It is my hope that from Zambia, we will see robust frogs in the business and industry, as well as in the public sector, in the pipeline that leap well and can even beat the snakes. In this spirit I wish today’s Conference a great success. I wish also all the participants good luck and continued success for the sake of formulating future-oriented business models.

Thank you for your attention!