

Check Against Delivery

Remarks by H.E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia at the Handover Ceremony for “Project for the construction of Kabwata Development Youth Centre in Lusaka” on Friday 14 August 2020

Hon. Brian Mushimba, Minister of Higher Education, represented by Mr. Succeed Mubanga, Director of Planning and Information, Ministry of Higher Education,
Hon. Given Lubinda, Minister of Justice,
Mr. Comas Lukupulu, Director of Community Development from Ministry of Community Development Social Welfare,
Senior Officials from the Government of the Republic of Zambia,
Mr. Sampa Miles, Mayor of Lusaka
Ms. Grace Chikumo-Mtonga, Director of Civic Forum on Housing and Habitat Zambia
Mr. Dino Bianchi of Toyota Zambia,
Representative from Media Houses,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today to celebrate the handover of this newly constructed “Kabwata Development Youth Centre”, a vocational training center constructed within the Japanese Government’s scheme of “Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects”, to the Given Lubinda Foundation which will take over the facility as its main operator. The total cost of construction which was made available by the Japanese Government has amounted in total to 103,106 US dollars.

At the outset, let me express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Succeed Mubanga, representing the Honorable Minister of Higher Education as Guest of Honor, for gracing this ceremony with his attendance. I also wish to thank Hon. Minister of Justice Given Lubinda for his initiative to launch this project and his commitment to run this Centre as its patron for the sake of capacity building of young men and women of Lusaka, in particular, of this Kabwata Community. Further, my special thanks go to the Civic Forum on Housing and Habitat in Zambia and its managing director Ms. Grace Chikumo-Mtonga. The Civic Forum undertook the construction in faith as signatory to the Grant Contract and the main contractor and has taken care of this Centre to date. We owe her today’s ceremony as well because this was also organized by the Forum.

Ever since I came to Zambia, I have been asking myself how much population Lusaka has precisely. Originally, I had been told something around 1.5 million. As I continue my tour of duty to meet with cabinet ministers, I was enlightened to learn that the “unofficial” population of Lusaka should be over 3 million. The truth will be clear when the outcome of the next nationwide census will be announced. Overpopulation of Kabwata is also visible as I try to pass this area to reach the Kafue Road. Impressive is also the proportion of the younger generation.

Under these circumstances, it is obvious that these young men and women hold the key to the peace and healthy development of communities of Zambia, and consequently, that of the nation itself. With proper education and/or vocational training, they will certainly have the potential to contribute to the development of economy. Otherwise, however, they may pose a threat to the peace and stability, if they remain without proper means to help themselves, or even feel abandoned by the community. I highly appreciate, therefore, the insight and initiative of Hon. Minister Lubinda as he sought from us the possibility of jointly coping with the challenge. After serious consideration on the scope, purpose and the expected benefit, the Embassy approved the proposed project and decided to make the necessary investment.

As we see it, this Youth Centre, once it becomes operational with its capacity of 200 people, will contribute to improving the access of youth to academic and skill development and better employment opportunities, thanks to the training courses in computer technology, carpentry, music and fine arts. The young students will not only receive training in these courses per se, but also have opportunities to compete among themselves and learn from each other, being enabled a collective learning and a mental and philosophical development. To facilitate the commencement of the Centre’s operation, the Embassy called upon Japanese private companies to supply second-hand desk-top computers, which, fortunately enough, was met with positive responses. Today, I am happy to announce that one of the representatives, Mr. Dino Bianchi of Toyota Zambia Ltd, is here with us to perform, on behalf of all the Japanese companies, the handover of computers to the Lubinda Foundation. The other companies which donated the computers are: TOYOTA Tsusho Africa, JTI Leaf Zambia and Kansai Plascon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we face the impact of COVID-19 on our economy and labor market, the initiative that is being launched today in the form of handover of the Youth Centre is only a modest step. However, by combining the forces of teachers, community members,

young people, and the politics, we will certainly have the power to overcome this difficulty. The challenge to this country, represented by the accumulated debt payment, is enormous. However, it is my ardent hope that the Zambian people, young and eternally young, will make it to achieve a sustainable economic development. Japan stands ready to do whatever we can to help the Zambian people to this cause, including JICA which has been sending experts and volunteers (JOCV) to various institutions.

In concluding, let me express my hope that the Centre will engage as many young Zambians as possible and become a true Youth Centre for all. In this spirit I wish the Centre and its teachers and staff, Lubinda Foundation, Community of Kabwata and all here present best of luck and success in their future endeavors and engagement.

Thank you for your attention.