

Statement of Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia at the Ceremony of the Exchange of Notes for Japan's Grant Aid "The Economic and Social Development Programme" (provision of Medical Equipment) on Thursday 20 August 2020

Hon. Dr. Bwalya Ng'andu, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Zambia,
Secretary to Treasury, Permanent Secretaries and Senior Government
Officials present,
Representatives from Media Houses,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always a great pleasure to come to the office of Finance Minister, Hon. Dr. Ng'andu, and once again, to sign and exchange the Notes on another significant cooperation between Japan and Zambia in the health sector, amid our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. This time, we are providing advanced medical devices under the title of "The Economic and Social Development Programme", another Japanese Government's Grant Assistance, amounting to up to 200 million Japanese Yen or approximately 1.88 million US Dollars.

Together with "The Project for Upgrading Health Centres to Level 1 Hospitals in Copperbelt Province", the Notes of which we signed just last month, today's signing makes another pillar of support in the health sector for the year of 2020 for Zambia, symbolizing the close ties between our two countries and peoples. This package of assistance was made possible thanks to the initiative by Japan's Foreign Minister Motegi who has secured an extra budget from our state treasury to support the Zambian Government as it intensifies its efforts to fight COVID-19.

The main beneficiary of this support are the medical doctors, health workers and others who are working hard on the forefront of COVID-19 in the key regions, namely Lusaka, Copperbelt, Muchinga, Eastern and Central Provinces and their key hospitals. Further, we have included the border town of Kazungula in the Southern Province, recognizing that the bridge over the Zambezi will soon be opened for the traffic connecting Zambia and Botswana. The hospitals in question will receive medical equipment such as Blood Gas

Analyser, Portable Digital Xray Machine, Oxygen Generator etc. Infrared Thermography Cameras and Hospital Tents are also among the goods to be put in place, including at Kazungula border crossing.

I am aware that H.E. President Dr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu sees in the improvement of health services an invaluable foundation for the Zambian economy. Therefore, I hope – and am convinced – that the medical equipment thus provided through this project will prove to be a meaningful support for both the medical experts and the people of Zambia at large on their way ahead facing the future. As the COVID-19 allows us no certain prospect of an early ending yet, the medical devices, once having become operational, will be a valuable instrument serving the medical experts on the frontline, thus easing the pressure and burden put on their shoulders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to recall that Japan's support to Zambia in the recent past in the health sector included also the provision of Infrared Thermography Cameras for the border control points (10 at ground crossings and 4 at international airports) amounting to 3.4 million ZMW (346 thousand USD). At that time (2017), it was responding to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease pandemic. In the same year, Japan provided the UNZA Veterinary Medicine School with a laboratory for testing and nursing of Ebola Virus. Not surprisingly, I am glad to hear that the cameras at the entry points are still working well. The UNZA Vet Medicine laboratory, too, is serving as one of the authentic institutions in Zambia for the testing of SARS-COV-II.

This, I think, clearly characterizes the nature of Japanese cooperation with Zambia – namely a “far-sightedness” and a “long breath”. It is our policy to serve the interest of the Zambian Government and people not just to find quick solutions, but rather in the long run. As the English proverb goes, “a friend in need is a friend indeed.” In such a way I hope to see our relationship enhanced even further. At the end of the day, we would like to see Zambia emerge as a strong, self-sustainable country with robust health services – thus becoming a model case in the Sub-Saharan African region; and as a solid partner to Japan.

Before closing my remarks, let me extend to all the health workers in Zambia my best wishes for their tireless engagement in terms of COVID-19 and beyond, without whose efforts our life in the “New Normal” would look much more uncertain and precarious. Let us stick together as we continue our fight against the pandemic. Likewise, I stay with Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ng’andu in his fight against the debt problem and in search of a sustainable budget management. As we strive through this difficult time, let us hope that we will all be “victors in the fight”.

Thank you for your attention!