

**Remarks by Ambassador H.E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta on the
Occasion of ROCINANTES's Grant Contract Signing Ceremony at
the Ambassador's Residence, Leopard Hills Road 16C, Lusaka On
February 26th, 2021**

Dr. Kennedy Malama, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Guest of Honour,
Your Royal Highness Chief Chamuka, Chisamba District,
Mr. TANAKA Yuta, Project Manager, ROCINANTES,
Mr. Griffin Chikaile, Field Coordinator, ROCINANTES,
Dr. Isabelle Meleki, District Health Director, Chisamba District Health Office,
Representatives from the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you to my residence on the occasion of the Signing Ceremony of the Grant Contract of a project within the framework of "Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO projects" by the Government of Japan. Today, the project titled "Project for Improvement of Maternal and Child Healthcare in Mwapula Catchment, Chisamba District" implemented by ROCINANTES will be officially sealed by the signing. Its total budget amounts to up to 357,377 US dollars.

First of all, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Kennedy Malama for his attendance here today, representing the Zambian Government and delivering a message on its behalf. It is also an honour to have Royal Highness Chief Chamuka with us on this occasion. The presence of governmental and traditional authorities will undoubtedly ensure an effective implementation of this project, and therefore I hope very much that the coordination involving many stakeholders and, in particular, the local population will be carried out smoothly. At the end of the day, the expertise of running a mother's shelter and self-enlightenment on maternal healthcare should be handed over to the people in the target area of this project and kept alive in their hands.

I further welcome Mr. TANAKA Yuta who has travelled a long way to Zambia for this signing and will take responsibility for the implementation, as well as Mr. Griffin Chikaile who will play a key role in the coordination on the ground. My appreciation also goes to Dr. Meleki for her continuous support for ROCINANTES toward launching this project. It is, indeed, gratifying that the project is taking off now, considering that the COVID-19 pandemic has been overshadowing our lifestyle in many ways. I cannot but hope that all the stakeholders will join hands and overcome the anticipated difficulties in the phase of implementation.

From the conversations I had recently with the new Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Jonas Chanda, I am aware that maternal and postnatal healthcare is one of the most important pillars in the healthcare system and policy in Zambia. Therefore, it is of significance that a cooperation in this area will be materialised through the engagement of a Japanese NGO, hand in hand with the Zambian people. Having successfully implemented projects in Sudan for many years before, ROCINANTES will certainly

prove to be a reliable partner for Chisamba District. For my part, I highly appreciate its donation of masks and other sanitary goods in support of schoolchildren in the Central Province, in response to a request in this regard by the Provincial Minister, Hon. Sydney Mushanga at the time of school reopening. This contribution, by the way, was also referred to in the statement of Hon. Minister Dora Siliya just last week when she and I exchanged messages celebrating the 61st birthday of H.M. the Emperor of Japan.

With the implementation of this new project which will follow up on ROCINANTES's self-financed previous Maternal and Child Health (MCH) project in Mwapula, a mothers' shelter with maternity waiting facilities, delivery rooms, a postpartum observation room and relevant sanitary facilities will be built at the Mwapula Health Post. Further, the project features transfer of expertise targeting health workers and local Safe Motherhood Action Groups (SMAGs). Trainings on appropriate use and maintenance method of the shelter will be provided by Japanese professionals in the medical field. Knowhows in many technical details such as perinatal knowledge and sensitisation will be also highlighted. Thus, sustainability of this project will be duly taken care of, together with many socioeconomic benefits for mothers during and after pregnancy, their newborn babies and the communities at large.

In concluding, let me once again express my deepest appreciation for the outstanding achievements by ROCINANTES to date, and sincere hope that it will further contribute to strengthening the healthcare system of Chisamba District with this project. With these remarks I wish Mr. Tanaka, the staff of ROCINANTES and its partner organisations of the project in Zambia every success and all the best in the future!

Thank you.