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**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta on the
Occasion of Grant Contract Signing Ceremony for Grant
Assistance for Grassroots Human Security projects at the
Ambassador's Residence**

On March 15th, 2021

Hon. Sydney Mushanga, Province Minister, Central Province,
Madame Bernadette Mushanga,
Mr. Bernard Chomba, Permanent Secretary, Central Province,
Madame Astridah Chomba,
Dr. Zikani Kaira, District Education Board Secretary,
All high-ranking officials of the Central Province,
Members of Media Houses,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you all to my Residence on the occasion of the Signing Ceremony of the Grant Contract of a project within the framework of "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects" by the Government of Japan. Today, it is the project titled "The Project for the Construction of School Building at Chitakata Community School in Kabwe District, Central Province" implemented by Kabwe District Education Board, represented by its District Education Board Secretary, Dr. Zikani Kaira who is going to sign the Contract with me. Today's Guest of Honour is the Provincial Minister, Hon. Sydney Mushanga, and Madame, to whom I wish to express my special appreciation for their presence. The Hon. Minister will address us later. I wish also to welcome Mr. Bernard Chomba, Permanent Secretary of the Central Province, with his wife. With today's signing, the project will be officially sealed and launched to be implemented. Its total budget amounts to up to 71,246 US dollars.

At the outset, let me touch upon what makes this project different from others. First, this is the very first project of this kind whose recipient is a Provincial Administration of Zambia. Thus, it will open a new horizon in Japan's diverse cooperation here in this country. Second, to materialize this project, the Embassy has been working hand in hand with the Central Province. To this effect, I am particularly thankful to Hon. Minister Mushanga. It was he who sent me a WhatsApp message, asking if Japan may be in the position to help protect schoolchildren from COVID19 as the schools were about to reopen. Followingly, I had the opportunity of visiting Kabwe and its neighbourhood,

including a school, the Mulungushi University and the famous Mulungushi Rock where the Freedom Fighters are said to have met secretly to stage struggles for the independence of Zambia.

On this visit, the seeds were sown which, later, have grown to flourish and bear fruit accordingly. On one hand, I passed the request of Hon. Mushanga for a donation of masks and other sanitary goods for the protection of schoolchildren from COVID19 to Japanese entities who were actively engaged in humanitarian or scientific projects in the Central Province. A positive echo came from Hokkaido University (KAMPAI Project Team), Rocinantes, a Japanese NGO which officially commenced a maternal and child healthcare project recently in Chisamba District in the Central Province and TCV, a Japanese used-car trading company active in Zambia and other African countries, with the donation of 2000 Masks, 600 Hand soaps, 70 Sanitizers, 9 Thermometers, 9 Buckets with faucet, Educational movie and Enlightenment posters altogether.

Another initiative involved a workshop aiming to familiarize the Provincial Administration with Japan's GHSPs, which took place on 30th September last year at this Residence. We had an intensive presentation and Q&A sessions, everybody who took part was eagerly learning the concept and methodology of this scheme. This has led to an ambitious plan to rehabilitate the Chitakata Community School which suffered from severe erosion and where schoolchildren are learning in extremely unfavourable circumstances. An intensive exchange including site visits and virtual conversation followed. Our Headquarters studied the proposal thoroughly and finally gave a green light to go ahead – the moment that this project was meant to be launched. For all these efforts that I explained above, I wish to extend to all those involved my most sincere gratitude and appreciation, as well as my heartfelt congratulations.

Now, for the sake of information sharing with the Media representatives, let me briefly sketch this ambitious project. It concerns a community school, located about 30 kilometers from the center of Kabwe. It is the only elementary school in the Community with 217 schoolchildren from grade 1 to 7. However, the roofs and windows of the classrooms are severely damaged, and the children are sitting on the floor to attend the classes. No toilets are available, not to mention hand-washing facilities. People use natural water from a nearby river, but are often apt to succumb to diarrhea, typhoid fever and other infectious diseases – implying, in short, unhygienic conditions.

The project funded by Japan encompasses the construction of two school buildings (1x3 classrooms and 1x2 classrooms), 3 toilet buildings, a borehole and a water washing station. Upon completion of this project, the school will be able to receive 200 more children, numbering in total 400, with the

addition of grades 8 and 9. From the side of the Central Province, 6 new teachers will be made available, together with 210 sets of desks by the time the construction work is completed. The improved circumstances will see to it that children will be motivated to stay at school until the secondary stage and that the rate of dropouts be reduced.

This alone might be just a small step. However, if the community comes on board and the parents will join these efforts, then together they can all contribute to improving the education level of the area and making the new school the model case in the Province as a whole. Hopefully, the children would be interested in learning the Japanese language and may be further elevated to the higher education. Why don't we then dream about some of these boys and girls even applying for Japanese scholarship for further studies in the future? For, I am aware that many young Zambians are eager to read Manga and watch Anime on internet anyway.

It happens that this year, we are commemorating the 440th anniversary of the exchanges between Japan and Africa. 440 years ago, a man from Africa travelled with a Christian mission to Japan and became the "First African Samurai". Therefore, it gives us good reasons to look back and think ahead into the future. Today's signing is the right moment to do this, isn't it?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these remarks I now wish the project every success and the Provincial Minister, PS and other officials of the Central Province all the best, in particular, in support of the Chitakata Community School and the children.

Thank you for your attention.