

Statement by H.E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador of Japan to Zambia  
on the Occasion of the Handover Ceremony of Japanese Books  
“For the Promotion of Academic Exchanges between Japan and Zambia”  
Wednesday, 5 May 2021

Professor Luke Mumba, Vice-Chancellor of University of Zambia  
Dr. Charles Banda, Librarian, University of Zambia  
Professor King Nalumbamba, Dean of Veterinary Medicine  
Dr Cheela Chilala, Head of Department of Literature and Languages  
Mr. Charls Mulenga, Director, University Education, Ministry of Higher  
Education,  
Mr. TOKUHASHI Kazuhiko, Chief Representative, JICA Office, Zambia,  
Representatives from University of Zambia  
Distinguished Guests,  
Members of the Media Houses,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the occasion of today’s Handover Ceremony of 90 Japanese books donated by the Nippon Foundation to the Library of University of Zambia, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the high-ranking participants from the University of Zambia, namely Prof. Mumba, Prof. Nalumbamba, Dr. Chilala and Dr. Banda, for accepting my invitation to the ceremony. I also wish to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Mulenga of the Ministry of Higher Education and extend my appreciation through him to Hon. Minister of Higher Education, Mr. Brian Mushimba, for his explicit support to our effort to intensify academic exchanges between Japan and Zambia.

At the outset, allow me to say a few words on today’s programme per se. Since this is a rare occasion to have all the stakeholders of UNZA, I intended to expand the scope of the ceremony, from merely a handover of books to the UNZA library, to an opportunity for exploring ways to deepen academic exchanges between our two countries. I, thus, prepared my intervention in the hope of giving an impetus to serve this purpose.

But first of all, the handover of books.

As Ambassador of Japan to Zambia, I welcome the initiative of the Nippon Foundation very much, donating 90 books on Japan to Zambia. As you see from the list, the donation covers a wide range of areas that will certainly meet the interest of the Zambian students and academics, from Japan's domestic and foreign policy, economy, culture, literature, history, social studies, to science and technology, etc. – all written in English, another surprise for me. Japan is a country of publication. However, books are written in Japanese, making it difficult for potential readers in foreign countries to access the original literature published in Japan. This donation demolishes the barrier that hampers the understanding of Japan by the Zambian public.

Participation by the Foundation in this Ceremony was prevented due to COVID-19. Therefore, I allow myself to convey to you the message of SASAKAWA Yohei, the Chairman of Nippon Foundation, which reads as follows:

*Since 2008, the Nippon Foundation has been, through its "READ JAPAN PROJECT", donating books on Japan written in English with the aim of promoting understanding of Japan. To date, we have donated more than 65,000 books to 1,066 libraries in 138 countries and regions. The Library of UNZA becomes the first recipient of this donation in Zambia. Personally, I had the experience of fighting against leprosy and racial discrimination in Africa. I also supported agriculture of this continent. In those days, I cherished the backing by the first Republican President Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and his Cabinet Ministers. For me, it is a great honour to be able to contribute to the sustainable development of Zambia and strike a bridge between our two countries through this "READ JAPAN PROJECT". I hope that insights and knowledge contained in these 90 books will not only deepen understanding of Japan, but also be of help in building a future Zambian nation. I understand that your University offers Japanese classes for students as well as for the public. Therefore, I hope that these books will be utilized by both students and Zambian citizen. Unfortunately, I cannot attend the ceremony myself due to COVID-19 but am looking forward to seeing you someday and hearing from you what impressions you have got from these books.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, I wish to go on to addressing the potentials of expanding the academic relations between our two countries. To talk about academic relations between Japan and Zambia, we cannot bypass the UNZA School of Veterinary Medicine, which has been serving as the basis of such exchanges for more than three decades.

Needless to say, the School of Veterinary Medicine at UNZA dates back to 1983, when the then Crown Prince and Princess of Japan (today, Emperor Emeritus and Empress Emerita) visited Zambia, reciprocating the state visit by the first Republican President, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda. The fact that Zambians at that time were barred from becoming a full-fledged veterinarian triggered President Kaunda to request the Crown Prince to support Zambia to establish a Veterinary School. This request was taken seriously by the Government of Japan, which decided to extend a grant assistance of about 40 million US dollars to construct the School of Veterinary Medicine at UNZA. Thus, the School of Veterinary Medicine has been, indeed, regarded as a symbol or a flagship in our bilateral relationship, flanked by the assistance by the experts of veterinary medicine at Hokkaido University.

On the occasion of a joint symposium held last year at UNZA, a visiting professor of Hokkaido University told me how professors and doctors at the University had been raising the School of Veterinary Medicine as if it were their own child since they started to work together. But now, he said, he sees in this School a clone of their own. In other words, transplantation of the DNA of Hokkaido University into UNZA has been completed perfectly, thanks to the over 30 years of cooperation.

Truly, the School has been serving as a basis of cooperative research between the two institutions, having produced many remarkable outcomes in areas such as zoonotic diseases or the lead contamination problem in Kabwe. Most recently, the Level 4 Infectious Diseases Laboratory at the School of Veterinary Medicine has been working on the forefront in Zambia's fight against COVID-19, again, strongly supported by the team of Hokkaido University experts. I am most delighted to announce that in recognition of the role that the School has been playing in enhancing the academic relationship between Japan and Zambia, Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Japan's Foreign

Minister, decided to confer on the School of Veterinary Medicine his own Commendation last year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here arises the question. The cooperation between UNZA School of Veterinary Medicine and Hokkaido University is an invaluable asset in our bilateral relationship – no doubt. However, would it be reasonable to assume that this cooperation is not expandable? The answer should be “no way”.

Recently, I had exchanges with Hon. Ministers Wanchinga and Mushimba, Ministers of General and Higher Education. They both agreed that Zambia should seek more extensive exchanges with Japan through academia and young students. What can be achievable, then? For example, UNZA and Hokkaido University may jointly consider, while preserving the partnership in veterinary medicine at its core, expanding to:

- a) other disciplines in various fields, including law and economics, or culture and historical studies,
- b) inter-disciplinary exchanges between the two institutions; or
- c) inter-university networks in both countries.

Personally, I consider it desirable to see a deepening in both student and academic exchanges. Notably for the student exchanges, Japan offers scholarship programmes sponsored by MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Science & Technology and Sports). However, other options are available, namely the ABE initiative (African Business Education Initiative for Youth) which is offered as part of Japan’s technical assistance through JICA. In substance, this is a framework to provide African youths with opportunities to study at master's courses at Japanese universities and therefore can be considered as the second Government-sponsored scholarship. These students are offered internships at Japanese companies if they so wish. With sufficient experience in Japanese business practices and culture, they are expected to contribute to developing their own business in the countries of origin and become a "navigator" for Japanese firms’ operations in Africa.

So far, 34 Zambians were given the opportunities in this programme since its start in 2013. “Unfortunately,” most Zambian students for this programme stem from Government or affiliated organisations and, in fact,

return to their “home” after completion of studies. I would like to see either young entrepreneurs in private business or talented students of business, economy, or governance at universities to apply for this programme and expand to global business. Maybe the Ministry of Higher Education or Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry should be encouraged to coordinate more with the Department of Human Resources Development at State House to seek a more aggressive application.

Compared to the ABE Initiative, the MEXT scholarship is a “classical” and more commonly known. The Embassy has recently announced the commencement of application for 2021. We see a steady increase in the number of applications in the last years, presumably responding to the increasing interest of young Zambian students in studying in Japan. Every year, approximately 3-5 applications are successful, and to that extent, we can be satisfied. However, a room for improvement can also be observed: While the post-graduate level scholarship is well taken advantage of, offers at the undergraduate level remain fully unutilized.

The problem here is two-fold. For one thing, lack of capacity in mathematics, physics and chemistry makes it extremely difficult for the undergraduate applicants to pass the examination. For another, the hurdles of the Japanese language are too high for them to overcome.

For the STEM curricula at secondary level, Japan is intensifying its efforts to help upgrade Zambia’s level of education through, among other things, the establishment of the STEM Education Training Centre in Kabulonga, thus augmenting Zambian Government’s effort to strengthen the schoolchildren’s capacity in this regard. Japanese language education, however, requires an additional attention. Hon. Minister Wanchinga suggested that Japanese class may be introduced in the secondary level, possibly using the STEM Education Training Centre as its base.

UNZA has its role to play in this regard. Thanks to Dr. Sande Ngalande, today, Japanese class is open not only for students but also for the public at large. I would be most delighted if UNZA would strive to strengthen its Japanese class, including by reaching out to the secondary level education as indicated by the Minister of General Education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, I wish to touch upon a more difficult part of the future collaboration, namely the expansion of academic exchanges. As I stated earlier, the UNZA-Hokkaido Vet-Medicine partnership has brought about many outstanding outcomes in joint academic research. One such area is the zoonosis, such as “the Project for the Epidemiological Research on Zoonotic Virus Infections in Africa”, involving African sleeping sickness transmitted by tsetse flies. The “KAMPAI” project which is focusing the lead-contamination in Kabwe has successfully identified the magnitude of the contamination and its cause and is attempting to present realistic solutions to this problem. I was told that this project will be upgraded to “DRINK” project this year. Most of these projects have been conducted by Japan’s unique international cooperation scheme called “SATREPS” – which combines funding for Japanese researchers registered at Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and development cooperation through JICA to support researchers in developing countries.

I am glad to note that a new project proposal between the Schools of Agriculture of UNZA and Hokkaido University has been developed, which can be seen as a herald of expanding the scope of cooperation between the two universities. Once it has been approved, the project will focus on improving rice species of Zambia, with the aim of contributing to strengthening the source of income and value chain for the farmers.

In addition to SATREPS, there are other potential schemes provided by JST, and Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), another funding agency promoting scientific research. And here again, Hokkaido University, and in particular, Prof. Ishizuka, is extremely active in securing the financing. She won funding from both agencies for projects starting this year which she developed with UNZA and other African universities.

However, if you search the websites of JST and JSPS, you will realize that there are a lot more international funding and research promotion schemes. They also offer opportunities for researchers to conduct research in Japan under certain conditions. Some of them might be quite attractive for Zambian researchers to explore. Usually, to utilize the funding schemes like these, you need to have a link with researchers in Japan. Therefore,

networking with Japanese stakeholders in various academic fields will be of great importance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have tried to suggest possibilities of future collaboration between our two countries in student and academic exchanges. I hope you have seen at least some potentials and merits for Zambia to be linked more extensively with Japanese academia. In fact, the way ahead may not be easy, and many challenges do exist. Our problem is that we do not have an expert in academic exchanges except the Hokkaido University Lusaka Office. But still the effort is worth trying, I believe.

In this regard, let me recall that this year marks the 440<sup>th</sup> anniversary of relationship between Japan and Africa. 440 years ago, a man from Africa travelled to Japan with the Jesuit missionary. When the delegation was received in audience by Oda Nobunaga, the strongest ruler of the “Period of Warlords” (16<sup>th</sup> Century) of Japan, this African man caught the attention of Nobunaga. He hired the man, gave him a rank and the name “Yasuke”. I call him the “First African Samurai”.

Now, my wife would like to elaborate a little more on a historical episode which took place at that time. Her story is much more exciting and academic than my policy statement. Therefore, I stop here, expressing my hope that this 440<sup>th</sup> anniversary in our relationship will encourage us to consider how Japan and Zambia can develop our relationship further. Thank you for being my audience – and your patience.

*The Statement was followed by the Speech by Dr. MIZUUCH Akemi, Spouse of Ambassador, titled “How Japan and Europe interacted at the age of the First African Samurai –What a cultural and technological exchange brings to each other –“*