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Remarks by H.E Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia, on the occasion of the Exchange of Notes between the Government of Japan, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for “The Project for Promoting Youth Employment through construction equipment operating skills training.”

Tuesday, 28th September, 2021

Hon. Felix C. Mutati, Minister of Technology and Science,
Mr. Khaled El Mekwad, UNIDO Representative, Regional Office in South Africa,
Ms. Kayula Siame, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Technology and Science,
Mr. Mushuma Mulenga, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry,
Mr. Hideki Hattori, President, Hitachi Construction Machinery Zambia,
Media Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor and pleasure to be here today on the occasion of signing and exchanging the Notes for “The Project for Promoting Youth Employment through Construction Equipment Operating Skills Training,” which has been conceptualized and worked out in harmony among the stakeholders concerned, namely the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Government of Zambia, Hitachi Construction Zambia and the Government of Japan including our Embassy.

The project, which will run over a period of four years from 2021 to 2025, will be implemented at a total cost of 417 million Yen, or approximately 4 million USD, made available through the multilateral financing scheme of the Government of Japan. This will support the programme developed by UNIDO with its expertise worldwide, most recently in such countries as Uganda and Liberia, where it implemented a similar programme with a Japanese company. The Ministry of Technology and science of Zambia, formerly the Ministry of Higher Education of Zambia, will provide an existing

construction equipment operator training centre in Kitwe on the Copperbelt – which will be expanded and augmented to the Vocational Training Centre Kitwe through this funding – for the training of young Zambian men and women. And Hitachi Machinery Corporation will be responsible for developing training curricula and providing machinery operators as teachers. In totality, this will be a unique joint project which must be supported by all these stakeholders that I mentioned. Through the implementation of this project, every year, 125 youths will be trained in this Centre, making up 500 youths altogether throughout the implementation period, to become skilled construction machinery operators ready to be deployed wherever they are needed.

In Zambia, urban infrastructure development and mining industries are attracting a lot of foreign investment. There is a growing demand for workers with required heavy equipment operating skills. However, the proportion of young population without education and training is estimated to be about 43% (2018), and the gender inequality is evident, with the proportion of young women without education and training reaching 48.2%.

Although Hitachi Construction Machinery Zambia has been doing its own in-house vocational trainings to its customers, this alone has not been sufficient to fill the gap squarely. This project, however, will substantially improve the situation because it will empower a wider range of talented young Zambians with the most needed skills in industries that are directly contributing to the sustainable development of Zambia. Once completed, this project will not only have helped job-creation among the youth, but also enhanced skills development of workers in both the public and private sectors in the long run.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am aware of how Zambia's youth has been characterized in US President Joe Biden's speech at the UN General Assembly on 21st September, in which he said:

“Democracy lives in the young people of Zambia who harnessed the power of the vote (...) to chart a new path for their country.”

When I met with the (then) President-elect H.E. Mr. Hakainde Hichilema for the first time at his private residence on 20th August, he told me how he much cares about the future of youth of this country and how much he wishes to ensure them job and education opportunities. Now that Mr. Hichilema assumes his responsibility as the 7th President of Zambia, I am so delighted that Japan, with this project, is escorting his journey as Head of State and supporting one of his most important election pledges this way. The success, however, will largely depend on the efforts and aspirations of those young Zambian men and women themselves who will be trained, and the support of the Zambian economy and industries who will be in the position of making use of these talents when they become available – namely in the form of job opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding, I now would like to express my sincere wishes for the success of this project and all the best for those who are involved in it. Last but not least, I wish the Japan-Zambian friendship yet another impetus for deepening under the new Governments of our two countries.

Thank you for your attention.