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Remarks by Ambassador H.E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta on the Occasion of ROCINANTES's Opening Ceremony at the Mwapula Health Post, Central Province on 12th October 2021

Hon. Credo Nanjuwa, Minister of Central Province, Guest of Honour,
Hon. Chushi Kasanda, Minister of Information and Media,
Your Royal Highness Chief Chamuka, Chisamba District,
Mr. TANAKA Yuta, Project Manager, ROCINANTES,
Dr. Kennedy Kabswe, Provincial Health Director, Central Provincial Health Office,
Mr. Brave Mazuba, District Administrative Officer, Chisamba District Commissioner's Office,
Dr. Isabele Meleki, District Health Director, Chisamba District Health Office,
Representatives from the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you here to celebrate the official opening of the Mother's Shelter at the Mwapula Health Post – an important component of the project which has been implemented by ROCINANTES under the title “Project for Improvement of Maternal and Child Healthcare in Mwapula Catchment, Chisamba District”. The Japanese Government has been supporting this project through its financial scheme “Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO projects (GANP)”.

I wish to stress that strengthening the healthcare system has been one of the main pillars of Japan's bilateral assistance to Zambia, having supported a number of projects at various levels. In the TICAD process, Japan has been promoting the universal health coverage (UHC) in African countries and Zambia has been the focus of such endeavours. Last year, at a time the entire world has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, we specifically targeted Zambia's healthcare sector which we thought must be upgraded to tackle the COVID-19 and other infectious diseases effectively in the longer perspective. Thus, I myself had the honour to sign and exchange Notes for “Upgrading of Health Centers to Level One Hospitals in Copperbelt Province” -- the third phase of upgrading level one hospitals following the two foregoing projects in Lusaka Province. Likewise, Japan will be supporting the frontline healthcare workers and medical doctors continuously by providing modern medical equipment including oxygen generators and digital X-ray machines, on the basis of the commitment that has been agreed upon. At the rural level, several health projects, with a particular focus on Maternal and Child Health (MCH), have been conducted in coordination with Japanese NGOs over the past 20 years within the framework of GANP, contributing to enhancing the quality of rural health service delivery nationwide.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the total budget amounting to 357,377 US dollars, this project has been actively supporting the MCH in Chisamba District, in a solid partnership with its cross-

sectional counterparts and under the strong patronage of His Royal Highness Chief Chamuka. With the official opening of the Mother's Shelter, equipped with maternity waiting facilities, delivery rooms, a postpartum observation room and relevant sanitary facilities in the premises of the Mwapula Health Post, the quality of perinatal and maternal care in the Mwapula District will be significantly enhanced.

There is more to it than that. When I had the opportunity of talking with H.E. President Hakainde Hichilema even before his inauguration, he told me what he wants to learn from Japan; and he called it "the Japanese business culture". In my view, Japanese organisations who are active in development cooperation, including ROCINANTES, are also conveyors of such a culture -- by the way they handle the projects. Similar examples are seen in the Japanese fans at a football or rugby stadium after the match – they do not leave the stadium before they have collected all the trashes and garbage within their reach.

As I was told, ROCINANTES has been engaging the community in shaping this project from the outset. For the future operation of the Mother's Shelter, it is further seeking the involvement of the community in the maintenance and management of the Mother Shelter through income generating activities. And this is exactly where such a cultural transfer can take place, including the treatment of local staff and working together with partners, stakeholders and the community on an equal basis, etc., which characterises the typical Japanese behaviour in interacting with other cultures.

Just like the ultrasonographic system of ROCINANTES which the Chief highly appreciates for preventing the gender-based violence (GBV) in rural areas, ROCINANTES has another potential to develop in Zambia in the field of MCH. In alliance with NEC, a front-runner company in biometrics authentication technology, and Nagasaki University of Japan, it is developing a system to enable registration of newborn babies within a few hours after the delivery and seeking a clinical verification of this system in Zambia. If this can be materialised, it will have a revolutionary effect on the protection of babies and mothers in many developing countries including Zambia and significantly contribute to securing a healthy and productive population of these countries.

In concluding, let me reiterate my appreciation for the unwavering dedication of ROCINANTES to the further improvement of the health sector in Zambia. I hope that the local health workers and volunteers will be well-trained in the effective use of the Mother's Shelter with the support of ROCINANTES, and that the population of the surrounding communities will benefit from this endeavour for a long time. Last but not least, I wish ROCINANTES and its partners in the District, as well as the project itself, all the best and every success in the future.

Thank you.