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**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador MIZUUCHI Ryuta on the Occasion of AAR Japan's Grant Contract Signing Ceremony at the Ambassador's Residence, Leopard Hills Road 16C, on December 28th, 2021**

Hon. Mr. Jacob Jack Mwiimbu, Minister of Home Affairs, representing Her Honour Mrs. Mutale W. K. Nalumango, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia,  
Ms. KANEMATSU Yui, Programme Coordinator, representing Association for Aid and Relief, Japan, or AAR Japan,  
Ms. TAKAHASHI Kazune, Programme Coordinator, AAR Japan,  
Representatives from the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great 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 Government of Japan's "Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO projects (GANP)". It is a project titled "Supporting Livelihood Activities through Agriculture in Meheba Local Integration Area (Phase Two)" implemented by AAR Japan, a Japanese NGO, which will be officially sealed by the signing. Its total budget amounts to up to 461,581 US dollars. Further, it is a great honour and privilege to have Her Honour, Madame Mutale Nalumango, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia graciously officiate the signing. I thank Hon. Minister Mwiimbu for being with us today, representing the Vice President and the Government of the Republic of Zambia. I further wish to express my appreciation for all those who have worked so hard to materialise the signing on the last working day of the year according to the Japanese work schedule.

Over a long period of time, AAR Japan has been actively engaged in supporting the vulnerable people in Zambia, with particular focuses on the integration of former refugees, and the maternal and child health, in close cooperation with the Zambian Government and the local community. It carried out JICA's grassroots technical cooperation project from 2017 to 2019 and has since been engaging in GANP projects subsequently, encouraging, for example, the former refugees to manage their borehole maintenance and establish a joint transportation system for their harvested crops, while providing cash-rich agricultural input and farming skills. During the current project which started from December 2020, the number of targeted populations has been significantly expanded and their organisational skills similarly upgraded. As a result of all these efforts, the livelihood of the former refugees in that area in its totality has been remarkably improved.

With the signing of the "Phase Two", as a follow-up of the on-going project that I just mentioned, the emphasis of AAR activities will be placed on ensuring the self-sustainability of these former refugees so that they will be able to run their agricultural

and commercial activities sustainably, through their know-hows with regard to profitable farming, effective marketing and a suitable sales strategy, or the systematic management of their businesses. In addition, the upcoming project envisages an infrastructure development plan, enabling the former refugee community to pave the dirt road by themselves. This part will be jointly implemented with another NGO, Community Road Empowerment (CORE). If the local community will become self-sustainable in terms of the management of their own basic infrastructure, it will also be a model for other local communities to follow suit, which will contribute to the upgrading of the surrounding areas and benefiting a wider scope of population in the North-Western Province.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my understanding that the Zambian Government, under the auspices of the Office of the Vice President, and in close coordination with UN agencies, has been striving to promote the resettlement and reintegration of former refugees. Japan, too, acknowledged this effort with appreciation and has been supporting it through our funding to UNDP and other relevant authorities and JICA projects to this effect. I wish to stress that the projects undertaken by AAR Japan so far and the one we are launching by the signing today, is a modest, but an important supplement to the overall endeavour nationally and internationally towards a successful integration of the former refugees.

By the time of the completion of the project, the former refugee community in the Kalumbila District will have become robust enough to strengthen the basis of their livelihood, with acquired skills for doing a modernised agriculture and marketing of their products, as well as basic know-how to maintain their lifeline. It will also contribute to active interactions with, and mutual interdependence on, the local Zambian communities. Their success will also encourage the local farmers to enter into market-oriented farming or develop a smart transport system of their own, leading to an enhancement of production and competitiveness of the agriculture of the North-Western Province at large. At the end of the day, I very much hope that all these things together will then make a great contribution to the Zambian agriculture and, finally, to the Zambian economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to thank AAR Japan for its strenuous dedications for the betterment of the welfare of the former refugees and beyond, and the Zambian Government for supporting the activities of AAR. Last but not least, I wish AAR Japan and its staff, its partners, and all the participants in this ceremony every success in the New Year. It will be the year of the Tiger according to the East Asian lunar calendar, which implies a “vivid flourishing of lives”.

Thank you.