***Check against delivery***

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador MIZUUCHI Ryuta at the Handover Ceremony of the Project for the Construction of a New School Building at Madaliso Community OVC School in Chipata District, Eastern Province,**

**o**n **Tuesday 13 January 2022**

Hon. Peter Simon Phili, Provincial Minister,

Dr. Allan Lingambe, Provincial Education Officer,

Mr. George Mwanza, Chipata City Mayor,

Mr. Levison Jere, Chief Kapatamoyo.

Ms. Maiwase Mbewe, executive director of the Madaliso OVC Group,

Representatives from the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you here today on the occasion of the handover ceremony of the project under the title “Construction of a New School Building at Madaliso Community OVC School in Chipata District, Eastern Province”, within the framework of Japan’s “Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP)”.　Let me first extend my sincere appreciation to the Guest of Honour, Hon. Provincial Minister Mr. Peter Simon Phiri for his presence today. My gratitude goes also to all those involved in this project who have worked so hard to make today’s handover a reality. With its total budget of 122,561 US dollars made available by the signing of the Grant Contact on February 7th, 2020, the Madaliso Orphans and Vulnerable Children Group has constructed classroom blocks, toilets, and a borehole with solar systems, as well as procuring furniture at Madaliso Community OVC School.

As I understand, the Group constructed a community school in 2002. And the school has been offering the children opportunity for basic education, including orphans and vulnerable children. However, many years of exhaustion and stresses that have been put on the facilities have torn down the main infrastructure of the school, such as the classrooms or school furniture. Increased cases of absenteeism and dropouts have been observed, which are mainly attributed to this poor infrastructure situation.

Against this background, the Group sought assistance from the Japanese Government, and after intensive exchanges between the Embassy staff and the Group, we have decided to extend the necessary support to the school to improve the damaged facility and enable the community to receive a sustainable education for their children at school. Now that the construction and procurement of furniture have been completed, the school can accommodate around 700 learners in properly furnished classrooms in which they can concentrate on their daily works at school. Now, it will be in the hands of the school, the pupils and their parents, and the community to tackle and solve the problem of absenteeism and dropouts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

According to the statistics of the Zambia Orphans Aids, there are estimated 1.4 million orphans and vulnerable children in Zambia. Thus, the role played by Madaliso Community OVC School in offering the orphans and the vulnerable children to receive an appropriate education should never be underestimated. The overall condition for the management of the school must have been further deteriorated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with frequent requirement by the Government to close the school from time to time or ensure that the Health Guidelines can be duly respected.

Under these circumstances, I highly commend the sincere and strenuous effort by the school and the Group to continue working on the project towards its completion. Also, as I mentioned on the occasion of the signing of the Grant Contract, the role of the community is also of great importance. In Japan, we call the children “the treasure of the nation”. I am sure that the same wisdom is being applied and practiced in Zambia as well. The children are the future contributors to the community. Therefore, they must be protected and well taken care of by the community itself at school. The problems such as alcohol and drugs abuse, early marriage and pregnancy of the teenage girls including GBV must be strictly prevented.

Although the project has been developed and implemented during the previous Government, it might be good for the School to open a new era with its latest infrastructure at the time of the start of the new Government, committed to ensure that the youth will be awarded the chance of better education and job opportunity. I would like to call on the Provincial Administration to keep an eye on the running of the Madaliso Community OVC School so that it will be able to shine as an institution of good education and excellent performance, as well as a symbol of Japan-Zambian cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding, I would like to thank the Madaliso Widows Orphans and Vulnerable Children Group and its staff anew for the completion of the project and wish them the best of luck for their further management. I further wish the children to be raised at the Madaliso Community OVC School all the best for their future. Last but not least, I wish all participants in this handover a successful New Year 2022.

Thank you for your attention.