

**Remarks by Ambassador H.E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta on the
Occasion of ROCINANTES's Grant Contract Signing Ceremony at
the Ambassador's Residence, Leopard Hills Road 16C, Lusaka on 9th
February, 2022**

Dr. George Mangwende, Permanent Secretary-Administration, representing Hon. Mrs. Sylvia T. Masebo, Minister of Health,
Your Royal Highness Chief Chamuka, Chisamba District,
Mr. TANAKA Yuta, Project Manager, ROCINANTES,
Ms. Cecilia Chipeta, Field Assistant, ROCINANTES,
Dr. Isabelle Meleki, District Health Director, Chisamba District Health Office,
Representatives from the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and 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 "Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO projects" by the Government of Japan. Today, the project titled "Project for Improvement of Maternal and Child Healthcare in Chisamba District" implemented by ROCINANTES will be officially sealed by the signing. Its total budget amounts to up to 272,420 US dollars. At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. George Mangwende, representing Hon. Sylvia Masebo, Minister of Health, for being with us to witness the signing and gracing this auspicious occasion. My thanks also go to all those who have worked so hard to enable today's signing ceremony.

Since 2019, ROCINANTES has been actively supporting the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) needs of Chisamba District, in close cooperation with the local community and its chieftdom. In particular, it has been successfully enhancing the capability of local health staff and the Safe Motherhood Action Groups (SMAGs) in dealing with pregnancy and the delivery of babies, and promoting awareness in that regard. To maximise the benefit to the local community and that of the human resources development, it carried out the construction of a functional mother's shelter with maternity waiting facilities, delivery rooms, a postpartum observation room and relevant sanitary facilities at the Mwapula Health Post and has been supporting its operations.

I recall the successful handover ceremony of the mother's shelter in October last year, with the presence of Chief Chamuka, the Minister of the Central Province, Hon. Credo Nankuwa and myself. On that occasion, I participated in the tape-cutting and tree-planting at the facility. Indeed, the activities of ROCINANTES were highly appreciated and an active engagement of the local community and its population on site was truly visible. Chief Chamuka further declared solemnly that giving birth to babies without using the mother's shelter would be subject to penalties and the penalties thus collected would be used to run the facility. This gave me the impression that the sustainability of this project was very promising.

Today, with the signing of the new Grant Contract, we will be officially launching a follow-up project of ROCINANTES based on the achievements stated above. In this new phase, ROCINANTES intends to install a pumping borehole powered by solar panels in order to ensure a stable operation of the shelter with running water and maintenance of medicines, vaccines and other medical supplies in refrigerators. The management of the water supply and electric power will be handed over to the local community with sufficient management skills transferred so that the local population will also learn to maintain their own lifeline, which, I think, will be revolutionary in terms of self-sustainability of rural areas in Zambia, as far as this system will work as planned.

I also recognise ROCINANTES's response to local needs, to introduce 10 small ultrasound machines in health facilities in the target areas with sufficient training of their handling – another remarkable input through the project. I remember Chief Chamuka saying that, in addition to their original function to detect risks during the pregnancy, these ultrasound machines will serve to deter the occurrence of gender-based violence and protect young girls and women from such crimes.

As I was told, during the new phase of the project, ROCINANTES is also planning to conduct an empirical research of maternal and child registration using biometric data with a brand-new technology, in collaboration with NEC Corporation and Nagasaki University. Once completed, this research will open a new horizon for the collection and management of data for medical purposes including vaccination requirements of the population from an early age.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding, I wish to express my appreciation to ROCINANTES for its unshaken dedication for the further improvement of the healthcare sector in Zambia, and my sincere hope that these efforts will culminate in various benefits for the local communities over a long period of time. Finally, I wish ROCINANTES and its Zambian partners all the best and every success in the future.

Thank you.