

*Check against delivery*

Remarks by H.E. MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia  
On the Occasion of the Handover of Equipment in Support of  
Zambia's Vaccination Programme  
at the Child and Health Nutrition Office, Ministry of Health on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Dr. George Mangwende, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, representing Hon. Sylvia Masebo, Minister of Health,  
Ms. Noala Skinner, UNICEF Country Representative,  
Senior Governmental Officials,  
Members of the Press,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you on the occasion of the handover of equipment in support of Zambia's vaccination programme for the protection of the population nationwide from the COVID-19 pandemic which consists of freezers and refrigerators, spare parts and other components in order to enhance the Zambian cold chain capabilities, in particular, in terms of transport and storage of vaccines. Today's handover constitutes a part of Japan's commitment of an emergency grant totaling US\$1.18 million (ZMW 24 million) through UNICEF which was announced in May last year. In addition to providing the equipment that has arrived here, part of this funding has been already spent for the procurement of smaller cold chain equipment and will be used for training of healthcare workers who operate the cold chain.

In the recent years, one of Japan's main pillars in supporting Zambia on its way to attain its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been the healthcare sector. Among them was, for example the upgrading of five Health Centres in Lusaka Province and two on the Copperbelt to Level 1 Hospitals, or the provision of modern medical devices to hospitals, including oxygen generators, digital E-ray machines or ventilators responding to the clinical needs of frontline medical institutions. As for vaccination, Japan has been actively supporting developing countries in this regard, by contributing USD 1 billion in total to the COVAX facility and JPY 18 billion (USD 160 million) to UNICEF as the so-called "last one mile" assistance. The equipment handed over today is part of the contribution of Japan to the fight against COVID-19 from a global perspective.

Although I see the fourth wave of COVID-19 in Zambia already having largely subsided, the challenges for the Government and the people of Zambia still remains with regard to vaccination till the Government's goal of 70% of the eligible population has been reached. Despite some of the trends we have recognised with the Omicron variant, namely relatively low severity risk and low mortality rate, we know that those not having been vaccinated are exposed to a much higher risk: As I understand, around 85% of hospitalisation and almost all mortality cases were those unvaccinated. In other words, vaccination has proven, so far, to be the most effective tool to acquire an adequate protection. As part of my own contribution in support of the Zambian Government, I am inviting only fully vaccinated guests to the receptions that I host at my residence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I conclude, let me express my hope that the equipment handed over today will be distributed countrywide quickly and will serve the Zambian Government and people in their fight against COVID-19. As is always the case, cooperation by the public and community will play a key role for the Government to achieve its vaccination goals. And I hope to see as many stakeholders as possible across the country join this endeavour. Last but not least, I wish the participants of this gathering all the best and continued success, and above all, the strength necessary to make Zambia's healthcare sector even more robust.

Thank you for your attention.