***Check Against Delivery***

**Statement by Mr. OMINATO Satoshi, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Zambia,**

**at the Handover Ceremony of the Medical Equipment under the COVID-19 Response to Ministry of Health,**

**at Kabwe Central Hospital, on Thursday 21 July 2022**

Prof. Lackson Kasonka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health,

Mr. Alex Makupe, Director of Clinical Care, Ministry of Health,

Dr. Victor Kusweje, Senior Medical Superintendent, Kabwe Central Hospital,

Senior Government Officials Present,

Representatives from the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I am here in Kabwe today, to officially hand over medical equipment to the Ministry of Health in Zambia. The medical equipment which will be handed over today is part of the equipment to be provided under Japanese Government’s Grant Assistance Scheme called “The Economic and Social Development Program.” This assistance to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic in Zambia amounts to 200 million Japanese Yen or approximately 1.88 million US Dollars.

Today’s handover signifies another pillar of support by the Government of Japan for the health sector in Zambia, following a signing of notes between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Zambia in August 2020. I would like to note that this assistance was made possible by Japan’s Foreign Minister who secured an extra budget from our State Treasury to support the Zambian Government in its quest to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2021 five provincial hospitals in Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Western and Southern provinces have benefitted from the medical equipment, with the latest equipment delivered to Kitwe Teaching Hospital and now here at Kabwe Central Hospital.

The medical equipment donated by Japan and now installed for use includes blood gas analyser, laryngoscope, autoclave, thermography, oxygen concentrator, portable ultrasounds and portable X-ray machines. This equipment is expected to improve the Zambian Government’s response to the pandemic and mitigate the burden on the medical staff across recipient hospitals. Moreover, it will strengthen the healthcare system in Zambia for the long-term.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan’s support for the health sector in Zambia in the recent past also includes the donation of cold chain equipment under the Emergency Partnership with UNICEF, which is worth more than 1 million US Dollars.

In addition, not too long ago in May this year, JICA dispatched Japanese experts to five general hospitals in Lusaka Province to strengthen their management capacity.

I am aware that the New Dawn Government in Zambia sees the improvement of health services as an invaluable foundation for steering the Zambian economy to prosperity. As we currently live our life with the COVID-19, I believe that increased levels of vaccination, coupled with adequate medical equipment and hardworking medical experts at the frontline, will reduce the pressure and burden of the pandemic. It is therefore my hope that the medical equipment provided here today and the equipment already installed around the country will prove to be valuable support for the health sector and the people of Zambia as a whole. I also hope that the equipment will be utilised to the fullest, in order to serve the Zambian public and therefore enhance cooperation between Japan and Zambia for generations to come.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my best wishes to the health workers in Zambia, who have been tirelessly engaged in the fight against COVID-19 and other diseases. I wish the Government of Zambia continued success in their efforts to improve the health and wellness of the people and assure them of Japan's commitment to that end.

Thank you for your attention!