

Remarks by H.E. Mr. MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador of Japan to the  
Republic of Zambia, on the Occasion of the Handover Event for support of  
Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants,  
1<sup>st</sup> September 2022

Hon. Mr. Rodney Sikumba, Minister of Tourism,  
Mr. Terry Njovu, MIKE/CITES Representative,  
Mr. Ian Stevenson, CLZ Representative,  
High-ranking Officials of the Ministry of Tourism,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you at the Ministry of Tourism today for the official handover ceremony of the project titled “The Establishment of a Scout Base and Entrance Gate in Eastern Side of the Lower Zambezi National Park Bordering the Rufunsa GMA”, which has been funded by Japan through CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) within the framework of MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) programme and implemented by Conservation Lower Zambezi (CLZ) since 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the economy of many countries including Zambia, in particular the tourism sector. Knowing the huge negative impact thereof myself, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Minister of Tourism, Hon. Rodney Sikumba, who is here with us as our Host, and through him to the Zambian Government for their tireless efforts to keep the economy running and for its revitalisation. My appreciation goes also to the CLZ which has been striving to implement the project despite the challenges they faced through this period, as well as the CITES Secretariat, for their efficient coordination with various stakeholders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having said that, I wish to note that COVID was not only a challenge but also provided me with a rare opportunity to explore many parts of

Zambia, which could not have been possible if I had other choices than traveling merely within the border of Zambia. In the past two years I could visit Kafue National Park and South Luangwa 3 times each and Lower Zambezi twice. I could even visit the farthest National Park in the West, namely Liuwa Plain. I have learnt the natural beauty of Zambia and the history of conservation efforts for the sake of this “gift by the Mother Earth”, including the anti-poaching activities. I have also learnt how countries in the region are working together to fight the illegal trafficking and trade of wild animals when Hon. Sikumba invited me to the Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF) Ministerial Meeting held in Livingstone in March this year.

It is against this background that I was informed of the Lower Zambezi Project and that Japan is indeed supporting it, which makes me all the prouder. I thank the Minister and the Ministry of Tourism for recognising the significance of this project and having made today’s handover such a remarkable event like this.

A total of USD 76,798 has been secured by Japan for the construction of a new scout base and an entrance gate on the eastern boundary facing the Rufunsa GMA and the upgrading and new construction of main roads crossing the National Park from the Chongwe Gate, via Jeki airstrip to the Rufunsa Gate. I know only one third of the whole portion of the road system before the Jeki airstrip. However, when I visit Lower Zambezi next time, I do hope to explore the untreaded path of this main roads leading to the Rufunsa Gate myself.

This and the communications infrastructure for 24/7 monitoring and tracking of patrol teams, newly established by Japan’s funding, will significantly improve the anti-poaching operations within the National Park where patrolling on the ground was almost impossible. It will also certainly open new game viewing and birding opportunities, thus contributing to diversification of attractions of Lower Zambezi for visitors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, let me assure you that the Government of Japan is committed to working with Zambia and the international community in combating illegal trade in wild fauna and flora, as shown by this contribution to Lower

Zambezi. On the occasion of CITES COP19 to be held in Panama in November this year, we will make our utmost, hand in hand with Zambia and other friends in Africa, to achieve the objective of protecting endangered wild fauna and flora from excessive international trade, from the perspective of 'sustainable use', based on scientific data.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Biodiversity is, as I stated earlier, the valuable gift of the Mother Nature which we are indebted to pass on to our future generations. It is an area where Japan and Zambia can and must work together for the sake of all humankind. As I conclude, I would like to thank once again all those involved for fighting illegal trade of wildlife and its conservation; and wish them good luck and success. Let us wish us also an ever-lasting friendship between Japan and Zambia.

Thank you for your attention.