

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Mizuuchi
at the Conferment Ceremony of Decoration
to Dr. Joseph Mulenga, President of ZAJIFA,
on 15th September 2022 at the Ambassador's Residence**

Professor Lackson Kasonka, Permanent Secretary – Technical Services, Ministry of Health

Dr. Joseph Mulenga, our distinguished Laureate of the Japanese Order today,

Family and friends of Dr. Joseph Mulenga

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to host the Conferment Ceremony of Decoration for Dr. Joseph Mulenga, who received the **“Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays”** of His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Japan, and authorized by the Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Mr. ABE Shinzo. First, I wish to express my warm welcome and gratitude to you all for gathering here today. Now, let me extend to you, Dr. Joseph Mulenga, my heartfelt congratulations on this special occasion.

Twice a year, the Government of Japan confers decorations to individuals who stand out in their contributions and achievements in various fields, and Dr. Joseph Mulenga, who has been serving as President of the Zambia JICA Friendship Association (ZAJIFA), was awarded the afore-mentioned order for his service to promote and strengthen bilateral relations and friendship between Japan and Zambia. The announcement was made already in April 2020, but we had to wait for the actual conferment ceremony till today because the certificate, with a stamp of His Majesty the Emperor and signed by the Prime Minister, and the decoration could not reach us during the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank Dr. Mulenga for having patiently waited so long.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I understand, Dr. Mulenga is a blood transfusion specialist by profession. Born in 1962 in Kasama, Northern Province, he finished his studies at Ivan Pavlov Medical School in Bulgaria in 1990 and, since 1992, has been working at various hospitals and blood centres/services in Zambia. One of Dr. Mulenga's remarkable achievements has been to transform Zambia's blood safety programme to that of a WHO-conform system.

In 1995, it was quite fortunate for us to acquire Dr. Mulenga as a future long-lasting friend of Japan and ardent advocate of Japan-Zambian relationship. It was in this year that Dr. Mulenga first visited Japan to participate in a specialised JICA training course on "Transfusion Medicine and General Management", organised at that time by Kumamoto University.

I am very curious to know and must ask him what transformed Dr. Mulenga during this course. Two years later, as he was back in Zambia, at the annual General Meeting of ZAJIFA held in 1997, he was elected as President of the Association. He has never left the post ever since.

In many countries, there are alumni organisations of former scholarship students sponsored by the Japanese Government or former JICA trainees. However, in no other country are the activities of such alumni organisations more intensive; and the network of members better taken care of than in Zambia. And I am quite sure that it has been the hard work and dedication of Dr. Mulenga that has made it possible for ZAJIFA to remain so active.

For example, through the facilitation and coordination by Dr.

Mulenga, there has been a long practice for JICA Volunteers who were dispatched to Zambia to be accepted by ZAJIFA members' homes at the time they arrive in Zambia and have an opportunity to familiarise themselves to the Zambian culture or learn the local languages.

Under Dr. Mulenga's Presidency, ZAJIFA was also organising field trips for its members to visit JICA project sites for the purpose of updating the former JICA trainees' knowledge on the latest bilateral cooperation being implemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am aware only of the most recent three years of Dr. Mulenga's Presidency. And this was a time in which all sorts of activities were very much restricted due to COVID-19 pandemic. I imagine that ZAJIFA, too, suffered a lot and has not been able to pursue what it had intended to deliver. With the end of the COVID-19 in Zambia and worldwide, however, and today's conferment of the Japanese order on Dr. Mulenga, I very much hope that his and ZAJIFA's activities will be revitalised and that interactions between ZAJIFA and JICA will be further intensified.

The topic that ZAJIFA chose for the last Annual General Meeting was "Promotion of Japanese Business in Zambia" – which is indeed very relevant under the New Dawn Administration under President Hichilema. As I indicated in my statement at that time, inviting Japanese business to Zambia is more easily said than done, because there are many obstacles that are standing in the way. And I think it is in this regard that ZAJIFA can discharge its functions properly as representatives who know both Japanese and Zambian cultures very well. It can even work as an interface

for the networking of Japanese business seeking business partners in Zambia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I confer the “Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays” on Dr. Joseph Mulenga, let me express my hope that we will see even more intensive exchanges between Japan and Zambia with the emergence of a new laureate of Japan’s order and with the support of everyone gathered here.

Dr. Mulenga, thank you so much for your contributions to date, and my sincere congratulations to you on this occasion of the conferment. I further call upon you to remain a true friend of Japan and make further contributions to strengthening our bilateral relationship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I now call upon you to join me once again to congratulate Dr. Mulenga – this time in Japanese?

“Omedetou-Gosaimasu”.

(END)