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**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador MIZUUCHI Ryuta on the Occasion of AAR
Japan's Grant Contract Signing Ceremony at the Embassy of Japan,
Haile Selassie Avenue, Lusaka
On December 1st, 2020**

Ms. TAKAHASHI Kazune, Programme Coordinator, representing Association for Aid and Relief, Japan, or AAR Japan,
Representatives from the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you to the Embassy of Japan on the occasion of the Signing Ceremony of the Grant Contract of a project within the framework of Government of Japan's "Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO projects". It is a project titled "Supporting Livelihood Activities through Agriculture in Meheba Local Integration Area (Phase One)" implemented by AAR Japan, a well-established Japanese NGO, that will be officially sealed and launched by the signing. Its total budget amounts to up to 311,972 US dollars.

First and foremost, I gladly welcome Ms. TAKAHASHI Kazune of AAR Japan, who has travelled all the way from Japan to Lusaka to sign this Contract – despite a number of challenges still being posed by COVID-19. For example, Japanese Government's current travel advice discourages Japanese nationals to travel overseas, including to Zambia. And why is she here? Because she disobeyed the Government's advice, which I respect exceptionally. It is an expression of such a strong commitment and determination of AAR Japan to this two-year project for the good of the former refugees in Meheba.

Over a long period of time, AAR Japan has been actively engaged in supporting the integration of former refugees, as well as in the health sector in Zambia, for instance, by implementing JICA's grassroots technical cooperation project. One of its achievements has been the establishment and promotion of self-help groups for the farmers of Meheba from 2017 to 2019. Further, it has successfully brought the "Maternal and Child Health Project" – also within the framework of GANP – in Chisankane Area, Kafue District, into completion in 2019, having launched the project in the year 2016. In the same year (2019), AAR Japan launched another project titled "the Livelihood Support Project in Meheba Local Integration Area in Kalumbila District". This was a significant project, having greatly contributed to improving local farmers' standard of living, by the establishment of a joint crop transportation system and the provision of agricultural input and cultivation skills.

I am particularly pleased to note that Zambia's efforts of integrating the former refugees into the local community are being supported by a Japanese Organisation. Protection of refugees itself is a noble cause. It is an act of humanity. However, humanity should not stop there, because refugee camps are basically a temporary shelter. Nevertheless, there are many refugee camps in the world which have become almost permanent. I have personally seen many of those in the West Bank or Gaza on the Palestinian soil. It is for this reason that I very much admire the Zambian Government's commitment to providing the refugees not only with a temporary shelter, but also a permanent "home" in which they can exercise their basic human rights, to live in dignity and peace, as well as to pursue happiness and well-being.

The new project which will be officially launched by the signing of this Grant Contract is a follow-up to its preceding one that I mentioned earlier, and expected to introduce solid market-oriented approaches in enhancing the livelihood of the targeted farmers. By the time the project is completed, the farmers will be so well trained that they will be able to select high-demand seeds by themselves, or expand the market for their products, or even conduct self-maintenance of expensive equipment that will be supplied by this project. Thus, the farmers will be able to obtain self-sustainability for the years to come. And the success of these farmers might ensure solid tax revenues for the Zambian Government, which, in turn, will be a gift for the Government as it pursues self-sustainability of the State budget

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my appreciation to AAR Japan for its great contribution to date; and wishing its staff every success in their future activities. May the project enjoy full support of its counterparts and administration, and harvest remarkable achievements.

Thank you.