



**Remarks of H.E. Mr. TAKEUCHI Kazuyuki, Ambassador of Japan to Zambia
at the National Day Reception of Japan
to Celebrate the 63rd Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
(2nd March 2023)**

Honorable Rodney Sikumba, Minister of Tourism,
Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before starting, I would like to express our deepest sympathies to those who have been affected by current devastating floods in Zambia. I would also like to extend our heartfelt condolences to the victims in Türkiye and neighbouring countries of the massive earthquake last month. Japan and its people express solidarity with those injured and affected.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I heartily welcome all the attendees gathered here today. It is a great pleasure for me to host a full-fledged Reception, for the first time in three years, to celebrate the 63rd Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. I am most grateful for the earnest efforts by the Zambian Government for the anti-COVID measures, which have provided a sound environment for this event.

Having spent two months in this great country of Zambia, I find myself being in an important period of change and challenge for this country. My mission as new Ambassador of Japan to Zambia is to bring the good and long-lasting relationship between the two countries to the next stage, and make the relationship as visible as possible. I am looking forward to working hand-in-hand with people in Zambia.

In 2024, Zambia will celebrate the 60th year after independence, which also marks the 60th anniversary of Japan-Zambia diplomatic relations. I believe this will give us a great momentum to my mission. We must stand ready to further cooperate with you all, in the respective fields of activities.

At the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or TICAD8, held in Tunis last August, Japan expressed its aspiration to be “a partner growing together with Africa”, and to help realise resilient Africa, which Africa itself aims to achieve, through empowering people as individuals. This would be the guiding principle in Zambia-Japan relations.

Elected through democratic elections, the “New Dawn” Government led by President Hichilema, is pushing every sort of socio-economic reforms forward, despite all kinds of challenges including its difficult financial situation. We see that the Government embraces the fundamental values of freedom and democracy, placing “people as individuals” at the core.

Today, the international community is facing multiple challenges. On one hand, peace, stability and the order based upon the rule of law are undermined. On the other, climate change is of great concern. Japan and Zambia, sharing the same fundamental values, are in a position to work together to tackle such challenges. We wish to consolidate such partnership with Zambia, and contribute together to the international community.

“Empowering people as individuals” has been a key of the development cooperation between Japan and Zambia. One example is Japan’s support to foster STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education in Zambia, in cooperation with JICA. Since 2013, Japan has contributed approx. 9 million USD in this field, and the first-ever STEM education training centre for teachers was completed last year. We are also happy to see that a Japanese company is providing support in the establishment of a heavy-equipment operation training centre.

Zambia is not only rich in natural mineral resources, but also in human resources, including the youth and women. We would like to combine the technologies, experiences and investments of Japan with Zambia’s high human potential, to forge a business relationship to the process of “growing together”.

Enhancing cultural exchanges would be another mission we are to engage in. I was happy to know that the Japanese language course at UNZA resumed last year, with great support from Hokkaido University. Also, our cultural exchange cooperation has extended from the well-developed collaboration in Judo and Karate to a new field: “Japanese pop culture”.

In closing I touch upon another important notice. I mentioned the importance of mutual understanding in the cultural field. All the honourable guests today are well aware that food and drinks are excellent symbols of culture of a country. Aside from Japanese food, we are serving Japanese sake and wine at the drink counter for you. Please take time for one sip of each of them to know Japan from different angles. If you like the taste, we are happy to set up another occasion of tasting them for further understanding of their valued taste and flavour.

Thank you.

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