

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. TAKEUCHI Kazuyuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia,
on the Occasion of
the Closing Ceremony of the "Zambia Marumori Rural Community
Development Project Through Market Oriented Farming"
Friday, 23rd August 2024**

Mr. Pascal Chipasha, Provincial Agricultural Coordinator (PACO), Lusaka Provincial Office

Ms. Namulula Mwangala, District Agricultural Coordinator (DACO), Chilanga District Office,

Field officers and all farmers present,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great honour to have the opportunity to speak to you all here today. As we celebrate the completion of this international cooperation project between Zambia and Marumori Town of Japan, I am delighted to reflect on its achievements and to share our hopes for the future.

Firstly, I would like to touch upon the background that led to the inception of this remarkable project. In Zambia, approximately 70% of the labour force is engaged in agriculture, with the vast majority being small-scale farmers. However, low productivity, coupled with high poverty rates in rural areas, presents a significant challenge. Through JICA's programmes, Japan has been supporting the revitalisation of rural communities in Zambia.

In 2011, Marumori Town in Miyagi Prefecture, northern part of Japan, had the opportunity to welcome five small-scale farmers from rural Zambia as trainees. At that time, Marumori Town was facing its own challenges, including declining and ageing population, which had led to a sense of stagnation in the region. To overcome these difficulties and to revitalise the community, the possibility for technical cooperation with Zambia was explored. As a result, the project was launched in 2016 to share Marumori Town's agricultural techniques with Zambia. Despite the travel difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic later on, agricultural experts from Marumori Town and trainees from Zambia continued to promote mutual exchanges in agricultural techniques and culture. Specifically, this exchange

included improvements in traditional bee-keeping efficiency, composting techniques, marketing, and long-term storage methods for agricultural products.

Additionally, as part of the cultural exchange, a Zambia festival was held in Marumori Town, featuring an exhibition of project activity photos and a tasting event of Zambian cuisine, which fostered cross-cultural understanding between Marumori and Zambian citizens. Furthermore, at the Agriculture Show in Zambia, Chilanga and Kafue Districts in Lusaka Province, some of whose farmers were trained in Marumori, won the first place in the category they competed in. In this way, this project has fostered not only technical training but also a deep and lasting connection between the people of Marumori Town and Zambia.

In July of this year, during my temporary return to Japan, I had the opportunity to visit Marumori Town. Through this project, I have witnessed the progress of two-way exchange in agricultural techniques between the two countries. For example, Marumori Town hosted study sessions on Zambian agriculture and learned about Zambian techniques, and Marumori Town farmers tested them to their own agriculture method. This bilateral collaboration has deepened the townspeople's understanding of international cooperation and enhanced their motivation. Furthermore, the exchange between children in Marumori Town and Zambia has also progressed, ensuring that this relationship is passed on to the next generation, fostering continued development and friendship between the two countries. I am confident that this project has undoubtedly been beneficial for both countries and serves as a model case for international exchange activities.

In conclusion, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the cooperation and efforts of all those involved in this project. While this project may have reached its conclusion, I am certain that the bonds of friendship between Zambia and Marumori Town will continue to prosper for the future. This year marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Zambia, and on this auspicious occasion, I sincerely hope that the cooperation between our two countries will continue for many years to come.

Thank you.

(Check against Delivery)

(End)