

**Remarks of H.E. Mr. TAKEUCHI Kazuyuki
Ambassador of Japan to Zambia
at the National Day Reception of Japan
to Celebrate the 65th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
5th March 2025**

Our Guest of Honour, Honourable Collins Nzovu, Minister of Water Development and Sanitation,
Honourable Ministers and Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this reception celebrating the 65th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. As you may recall, last year's reception was held amidst the recovery from a cholera outbreak. On the contrary this year, thanks to the efforts of the Government of Zambia and various stakeholders, I am delighted to host this event in an environment where the epidemic of infectious diseases has been effectively contained.

The year 2024 was memorable for Japan and Zambia as we celebrated the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between both nations, as well as Zambia's 60th year of independence. To celebrate this momentous occasion, the Embassy of Japan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Zambia established the Joint Executive Committee, comprising of government representatives and other stakeholders including from academia and the private sector. The committee met several times to highlight Japan's six-decade cooperation with Zambia in various areas. A slide show of last year's activities is being projected in the lounge and I hope you enjoy it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As many of you are aware, soon after closing the 60th anniversary year of 2024, we had the honour of hosting His Excellency President Hichilema in Japan in February. During his visit, President Hichilema paid a state call on His Majesty the Emperor of Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister ISHIBA Shigeru. The two leaders reaffirmed that the two nations are important partners who share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, and held productive discussions on further cooperation in various fields. The Investment Agreement between Japan and Zambia was also signed during the visit. The signing of this agreement is expected to further promote the development of Zambia's investment environment and strengthen economic ties between the two countries.

In addition to Tokyo, President Hichilema visited Aichi and Kyoto prefectures. In Aichi, he toured Toyota Motor Corporation and had very productive discussions with its affiliate trading company, Toyota Tsusho, regarding collaboration in the energy and manufacturing sectors. In Kyoto, he visited innovative enterprises in the medical sector as well as in the waste management sector. As one of the important events during his stay in Japan, the Japan-Zambia business forum was held in Tokyo and President Hichilema delivered a keynote speech to introduce the attractive investment climate in Zambia and his government's efforts to the Japanese business community. As many as 220 participants both from Japan and Zambia attended the forum, and about 100 Japanese companies eagerly listened to the presentations.

This visit symbolises the beginning of a new chapter of our bilateral relations. Zambia, often referred to as the "beacon of peace," plays an increasingly significant role within the SADC region and the African continent at large. In order for Zambia to keep shining not only in Africa but also in the world, Japan, as a partner who shares the same values, will endeavour to keep building a stronger cooperative relationship with Zambia through our bilateral policy dialogue, the establishment of which was announced during President Hichilema's visit to Japan. As Ambassador to this country, I am fully committed to further strengthening our bilateral relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, in less than 2 months, Japan will host the World Expo 2025 in Osaka, Kansai. This event will be the first World Expo since the COVID-19 pandemic, offering a unique opportunity for the global community to come together and think about our future. Zambia will also participate in this Expo and showcase its rich nature and culture. I hope many of you visit Japan and participate in the Expo. Furthermore, in August, Japan will host TICAD 9 in Yokohama. As many of you know, TICAD or the Tokyo International Conference on African Development focuses on "human-centred" approaches. We value the ownership of Africa and partnership with the international community to build resilient societies for Africa. We anticipate fruitful discussions during TICAD 9.

In the field of development cooperation, we had several achievements last year by implementing various programmes in different sectors. Japan provided Zambia with emergency food relief in response to the severe drought. To improve public health measures, we launched research aimed at improving water and sanitation conditions in peri-urban areas or compounds of Lusaka, as well as feasibility studies for water supply development, to prevent and control infectious diseases such as cholera. Also in the health sector, in August, under the presence of His Excellency President Hichilema, the Chamboli Level 1 (One)

Hospital, equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment, was handed over in Copperbelt Province, contributing to improved medical services. This year, we will continue our cooperation in critical sectors, including irrigation development for small-scale farmers, smart agriculture, infrastructure development in refugee settlements, and mining supply chain support, in collaboration with international organisations.

Cultural exchange also thrived last year, leveraging the momentum of the 60th anniversary. The Japanese doll exhibition held at the Lusaka National Museum in August attracted as many as 6,000 visitors in a month. Japanese drum performances were also held in four locations in Lusaka and attracted a total of approximately 3,000 people. Moreover, as you witnessed just now, the students from Evelyn Hone College, who sang the Zambian national anthem tonight, have been trained by JICA volunteers. Japan's cooperation on education as well as our culture exchanges leave significant impacts, and we will seek to create more opportunities to deepen our mutual understanding, particularly among the youth who will serve as the foundation of our future relations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we embark on another 60 years, we look forward to strengthening Japan-Zambia relations across various fields with all of you. Tonight, we will offer Japanese Sake, Japanese plum wine, Sushi, and Tempura to showcase our culture. Please enjoy the rest of the evening with the food and Sake!

Thank you very much.

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