

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. TAKEUCHI Kazuyuki,
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Zambia,
On the Occasion of the Launch Ceremony of the Emergency Response
to El Nino Drought on Smallholder Farmers in Zambia to Enhance
Resilience through the Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO)**

Wednesday, 16th April 2025

Good morning. Allow me to start by acknowledging the presence of,

Mr. John Mulongoti, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture,
Mr. Norman Chipakupuka, the National Coordinator for the Disaster
Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU),
Ms. Percy Suze Filippini, Country representative of the Food and Agriculture
Organisation (FAO),
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here with you today, on the occasion of the launching ceremony of the project called, “Emergency Response to El Nino Drought on Smallholder Farmers in Zambia to Enhance Resilience”. This project, funded by the Government of Japan, is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). On behalf of the Government of Japan, I am pleased to inform you that this project will accelerate the recovery from recent drought and build the further resilience of approximately 6,000 small-scale farmers in Kafue and Chilanga districts of Lusaka Province, who have been severely affected by the recent drought.

As you are aware, Zambia has suffered an unprecedented drought during the 2023-2024 due to the El Niño phenomenon. This drought has been described as the worst in more than 40 years, with many farmers experiencing significant declines in crop yields and crop failure. The drought has severely affected seven provinces across the country, leading to widespread water shortages, food insecurity, and malnutrition. In response, His Excellency President Hichilema declared a national disaster and emergency in February 2024.

In order to swiftly address this crisis, the Government of Japan has mobilised 750,000 US dollars through its supplementary budget for FY2023 to launch this emergency support project in partnership with FAO.

Under this programme, first, the climate-resilient and sustainable farming practices, including the adoption of organic farming and appropriate agricultural technologies, to improve productivity in the face of unpredictable weather conditions will be promoted.

Second, agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, and tools will be distributed to small-scale farmers by using an efficient and transparent e-voucher system, enabling timely and equitable assistance to them.

Third, water points will be repaired and solar-powered irrigation systems in selected communities will be installed, in order to improve access to water resources and enhancing resilience to drought.

Lastly, early warning information will be provided to high-risk communities, helping them to prepare for and mitigate the impact of extreme weather events in the future.

I would like to introduce one recent project implemented in Kafue and Chilanga by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) together with a small agricultural town, Marumori town in Miyagi Prefecture in Japan. From 2016 to 2024, under the JICA's Grassroots Technical Cooperation Project, in order to support farmers in these areas, JICA and Marumori town facilitated knowledge-sharing and capacity development among small-scale farmers. Marumori town also dispatched agricultural officers to introduce their farming cases and best practices to farmers in those two districts. By the end of the project, we saw that the project contributed to the enhanced productivity, strengthened farmer groups, and sustainable, market-oriented agriculture.

This project we are launching today stands upon the achievements of this JICA's grassroots cooperation, and seeks not only to respond to the current crisis but also to contribute to long-term resilience and prosperity for farming communities in this area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year marked the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Zambia. Over these six decades, our two countries have cultivated strong partnerships across various sectors, including agriculture, water, education, health, and disaster risk reduction. Japan's development cooperation is grounded in the philosophy of "learning and working together," and we view our efforts not merely as an assistance, but as a partnership built on mutual respect and collaboration. This project will be implemented on a basis of such a philosophy in our close coordination with the Zambian Government, local authorities, FAO, and the communities themselves. I believe such spirit of cooperation among us is a key to the project's success.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt sympathy to all those affected by the drought. I am confident that this project will assist to rebuild livelihoods in Kafue and Chilanga districts and contribute to a resilient building and more sustainable agricultural future in Zambia.

Thank you.