

**Remarks by Ambassador MIKAMI Akiteru
at the Grant Contract Signing Ceremony for the
Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects
Wednesday, 11th February 2026**

Good morning. Allow me to start by acknowledging,
Honourable Doreen Mwamba, Minister of Community Development and Social Services,
Honourable Collins Nzovu, Minister of Water Development and Sanitation,
Honourable Gifts Simuunza Sialubalo, Minister of Local Government and Rural Development,
Mr. Elias Siamibila, District Commissioner of Kazungula District,

Officials from Youth Development Organisation,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all today on this special occasion.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude to Honourable Doreen Mwamba, Minister of Community Development and Social Services, and to all our distinguished guests, especially the officials from Kazungula District, for making the long journey to be here today. Your presence is a clear testament to your dedication to human security at the community level and to a humane and sustainable future for this country.

Today, we have gathered to celebrate the launch of a meaningful project in four villages of Kazungula District, implemented by the Youth Development Organisation. This project made possible through Japan's grassroots grant of approximately 85,000 US dollars, includes the drilling of boreholes powered by solar systems in each village, as well as the installation of irrigation hoses. The impact of this project goes far beyond the improvement of water supply-it represents survival and dignity of the people and the communities, by securing livelihood, education for children and the health of the whole community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Traditionally, residents of these communities have collected water from the river for domestic use and for livestock-farming. However, reduced rainfall in recent years due to climate change has caused the river to dry up, placing increasing pressure on the few existing boreholes. Approximately 12,000 residents in the four villages, namely Siyandwa, Takayasiki, Musokotwane, and Ndulubila, as well as those surrounding areas, are facing severe water shortages. This has posed unprecedented challenges to the community, depriving thousands of people, and their livestock, of reliable access to clean water.

This is a challenge faced by many communities across Zambia and beyond, yet while the scale of the problem in Kazungula is vast and severe, it is lived through the daily experiences of individuals.

Water collection is primarily carried out by women and children, who must travel long distances and spend many hours fetching water -women walking for kilometres, children missing school, and families watching their livestock weaken.

I learned that losses of cattle and goats due to dehydration have exceeded 10 percent of total livestock holdings, further undermining household livelihoods. Women and girls often travel as far as 10 kilometres to fetch water and, in some cases, are forced to stay overnight away from their homes unattended. As a result, girls miss nearly half of the school week due to water-fetching duties, and some girls even drop out of school entirely due to pregnancy resulting from unmonitored travel.

With no alternatives available, community members are forced to use untreated water from dried riverbeds for domestic and public use, often shared with livestock, leading to diarrhoea and dysentery within the communities.

The Youth Development Organisation or YDO has been addressing these challenges in Kazungula District by supporting goat rearing, providing water infrastructure, and delivering health and environmental education for long time. Through direct engagement with YDO as well as the community, the Embassy was able to learn deeply YDO's long history of cooperation, strong community ties and clear dedication of the people to the survival of the community. Therefore, we were convinced this project is indispensable and needs immediate intervention, especially recognizing the role of women in sustaining the livelihood. thus.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to highlight that this project is consistent with Japan's development policy for Zambia, which focuses on improving the livelihoods of small - scale farmers, diversifying crops, and strengthening basic living infrastructure. We all know that access to water is essential for life and directly affects health, economic activities, education, and social stability. Therefore, ensuring safe and stable access to water, particularly in remote areas, is strongly recognized as a critical issue by the Government of Japan. To date, Japan has supported Zambia's rural development through the provision of safe water, including the drilling of boreholes in rural areas across the country, as well as initiatives to strengthen river water utilization systems here in Kazungula District. This project builds upon those past efforts and further contributes to improving access to water in Zambia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate that approximately 12,000 men, women, youth, and children will benefit from this project. It will significantly reduce the time required for fetching water and alleviate the heavy burden borne by women and children, freeing time for education, productive activities, and family life. Access to safe and reliable water will also lead to a reduction in waterborne diseases and an overall improvement in the health of residents. What may appear to be a simple provision of boreholes have far-reaching, cross-cutting impacts on daily life and livelihoods of the people. This project demonstrates the importance the Japanese Government places on basic living infrastructure and on improving the livelihoods of small - scale farmers.

In closing, it is my sincere hope that the improved water infrastructure will enhance people's health, economic stability, and educational opportunities, and above all, their dignity. Let us continue to work hand in hand to ensure that people in Zambia, whether in remote or urban areas, have access to adequate and safe water.

Thank you. (End)