

REMARKS BY H.E. MR. AKIO EGAWA  
AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF E/N FOR THE GRANT AID FOR  
POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION SECTOR POOL FUND  
LUSAKA, 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2012

Hon. Alexander B. Chikwanda, MP, Minister of Finance and National Planning,

Hon. Dr. John Phiri, MP, Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education,

Dr. Abraham Mwenda, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and National Planning,

Distinguished Officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia,

Mr. Shiro Nabeya, Representative of JICA Zambia Office,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today at this signing ceremony for the Exchange of Notes for the grant aid for Poverty Reduction Strategy, otherwise known as the “PRS” Grant. The grant of 300 million Yen, or approximately 4 million US\$, from the Government of Japan will be extended to the education sector pool fund for Zambia. I am confident that the grant will significantly contribute to the promotion of quality education and the achievement of the MDGs in the education sector in Zambia.

This grant is indeed epoch-making, for this is the first time that the Government of Japan makes budgetary support in Zambia by contributing to a pool fund. It is also the very first contribution made by the Government of Japan to education sector pool

funding in Africa. The Government of Japan considers Zambia to be a model country in Africa in the context of development assistance in the education sector and hopes that development outcome be maximized through utilization of the new PRS Grant and the ongoing Japanese assistance programs in the education sector in a strategically coordinated way.

Japan and Zambia have had a longstanding history of cooperation in the education sector. Since 1981, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has dispatched quite a number of Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers to work as teachers, especially, in mathematics and science. Later, between 1998 and 2005, 18 schools, worth about 32 million dollars, were built through Japan's grant assistance.

In 2005, JICA's technical cooperation project for the Strengthening of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (SMASTE) was launched in Central Province. Later, SMASTE was expanded in phase two to include Copperbelt and Northwestern Provinces, thus catering for over 14,000 teachers. Unrelenting efforts by the Government of Zambia in upgrading the quality of education led to the implementation of SMASTE phase three in 2011, under the new name of STEPS, which stands for Strengthening Teacher's Performance and Skills through School-Based Continuing Professional Development. Under STEPS, the target area will expand to cover all the provinces so that it will benefit more than 72,000 teachers all over the country.

In addition, on the request of the Zambian Government, a JICA educational advisor is to arrive soon and be attached to the Ministry of Education with a view to assisting in the

development of strategies for tackling various challenges faced with the education sector. It is most opportune as both Governments are augmenting cooperation by way of the PRS Grant.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 11<sup>th</sup> of this month, we commemorated one year anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which caused almost unprecedented disaster in Japan's modern history. Today, however, Japan is on a steady path towards recovery and reconstruction. Despite the enormous challenges brought about by the disaster, Japan remains committed to strengthened cooperation with African countries under the framework of TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development). We will strengthen our cooperation with Zambia in such sectors as education, agriculture and manufacturing industries, and energy and other economic and social infrastructure.

Education is a key to successful economic and social development. Japan has learned this in its own history of nation building and modernization. I would like to reiterate my earnest hope that this PRS Grant will bring about significant improvement of education in Zambia, thereby enhancing the country's overall economic and social development. I am sure that the provision of this grant will also strengthen the friendship and cooperation between Japan and Zambia.

Thank you very much for your attention.

(END)