

REMARKS BY
H.E. MR. AKIO EGAWA, AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY FOR THE PROJECT OF
PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IN ZAMBIA BY UNHCR
LUSAKA, 12th APRIL, 2013

Hon. Edgar Lungu, MP, Minister of Home Affairs,
Mr. Jacob Mphepo, Commissioner for Refugees, Ministry of Home Affairs,
Mr. Maxwell Nkole, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs,
Mr. Sakor Hippolyte Yohondamkoul, Officer-in-Charge, UNHCR Zambia Office,
Distinguished Officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia,
Mr. Yoshihide Teranishi, Resident Representative of JICA Zambia Office,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today on behalf of the Government of Japan at the launching ceremony for the Project of Protection and Assistance to Refugees in Zambia by UNHCR. The Government of Japan decided to provide a grant contribution of 3 million US dollars to the said project as part of its grant contribution of 119.5 million US dollars to UNHCR for humanitarian assistance in 19 African countries. Recently, the Government of Japan decided to provide a total of 525.4 million US dollars as grant assistance for tackling conflicts and natural disasters and promoting humanitarian relief in Sub-Saharan Africa, including the contribution to UNHCR.

The Government of Japan deems the problem of displaced persons, including refugees and internally displaced persons, is a humanitarian concern and an issue which would affect global peace and stability. In this light and from the viewpoint of Human Security, the Government of Japan regards humanitarian assistance to displaced persons as one of the most important pillars of Japan's contribution to the international community and has been proactively assisting the activities and projects of international humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Southern African region has enjoyed stability in recent years in contrast to some other regions on the continent. Notwithstanding such a welcome situation, the region has been beset by the prolonged refugee problem, which has become more diversified. Since independence, Zambia has generously accommodated over two hundred thousand

refugees. This is indeed a clear demonstration of Zambia's unwavering commitment to the consolidation of peace and stability in the region.

On the other hand, Zambia is faced with new challenges in relation to the protection to refugees. In the case of Angolan refugees, who account for nearly half of the entire refugee population in Zambia, voluntary repatriation has been in progress since 2002 when the civil war in Angola ended. However, the progress of voluntary repatriation has slowed down in recent years as many of the new generation of Angolan refugees born and raised in Zambia have difficulty in reintegration in their home country due to the language barrier. Hence, local integration in Zambia might have to be sought for those refugees.

Another challenge for Zambia is the influx of new refugees from DRC due to armed clashes between the government forces and anti-government armed groups in the Eastern part of the country, centred in North Kivu Province. The situation has swelled the number of refugees from this area, and there appears to be no immediate solution to this problem.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Seeking to provide a durable solution to the refugee problem in Zambia, the Government of the Republic of Zambia launched the Zambian Initiative, known as ZI in 2004. It was incorporated into Zambia's National Development Plan and widely supported by the international community, including the Government of Japan and UNHCR. The ZI was aimed to bring about a durable solution to the refugee problem through local integration of refugees, social and cultural co-existence of refugees with the local communities, and economic self-reliance of refugees. It was a multi-sectored, comprehensive development programme, comprising interventions in agriculture, health and education sectors.

The UNHCR has been instrumental in promoting the ZI. Since 2001, UNHCR has supported refugees who could not or preferred not to return to their countries of origin, by providing self-reliance and other support, including projects to cope with HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. In the project launched today, UNHCR introduces a socio-economic assistance programme, which is expected to enhance peaceful coexistence among refugees and local communities as well as to facilitate local integration of refugees.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Japan, in the past, contributed 1.2 million US dollars through the Human Security Trust Fund towards the support of the ZI with an emphasis on the agriculture and infrastructure sectors. In the agricultural sector, Japan's contribution was utilised in such projects as formation of an irrigation system, drilling of wells and upgrading of seeds to improve productivity. In the area of infrastructure, a 50-kilometre feeder road was constructed to make it easier for people to conduct their businesses.

The Government of Japan also extended technical cooperation through a project known as 'Development through the Empowerment of Rural Communities in Zambia Initiative Areas'. This project was implemented from 2006 to 2008 by JICA with a disbursement of 1.2 million US dollars to establish and support a sustainable model of agricultural and rural development for the Zambia Initiative target areas.

Japan has also been tackling the refugee problems in Africa through the process of Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). This year, Japan will host the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in Yokohama, Japan from 1st to 3rd June. TICAD V will focus on the three interrelated pillar themes: "Robust and Sustainable Economy", "Inclusive and Resilient Society", and "Peace and Stability". The Government of Japan considers this project by UNHCR very timely and highly important as it is also pertinent to these pillars, "Inclusive and Resilient Society" and "Peace and Stability", in particular.

Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate that it was in appreciation of the commendable efforts and initiatives by the Government of the Republic of Zambia and UNHCR that the Government of Japan decided on this contribution. It is my Government's sincere hope that our contribution will be conducive to realizing a durable solution to the refugee problem in Zambia. The Government of Japan remains committed to continued close cooperation with the Government of Zambia and UNHCR in addressing the refugee problem.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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