

REMARKS BY H.E. MR. AKIO EGAWA  
AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING CEREMONY FOR  
THE 3<sup>RD</sup> SMASE-WECSA TECHNICAL WORKSHOP  
AT SANDY'S CREATIONS, LUSAKA, 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2013

Hon. Mr. David Mabumba, MP, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education of Zambia,  
Distinguished Officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia,  
Distinguished Participants from the Member Countries of SMASE-WECSA,  
Mr. Yoshihide Teranishi, Resident Representative of JICA Zambia Office,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to join you today at the Opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Technical Workshop of SMASE-WECSA, Strengthening of Mathematics and Science Education in Western, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

I would like start by reflecting upon the development of SMASE-WECSA over the past 12 years and the role Japan has played during those years. The origin of this international association extends back to 1998 when the Government of Japan, through JICA, initiated its technical assistance project to strengthen mathematics and science in secondary education (SMASSE) in Kenya.

Education is a foundation for socio-economic development of any nation and strengthening of teaching expertise of teachers plays a pivotal role in the improvement of the quality of education. Furthermore, for teachers to improve their teaching skills, there must be a mechanism to enable them to continuously upgrade their knowledge of the subject. On the basis of such recognition, the Government of Japan has continued to help empower African teachers with skills to develop innovative mathematics and science lessons over the past 15 years. Currently, teachers in 19 African countries go through training in mathematics and science teaching under JICA programs.

Building on the success of the SMASSE Project in Kenya, SMASE-WECSA was formed in 2001 with the assistance by JICA so that the Kenyan experiences could be shared with other African countries to strengthen the capacity of teachers to teach mathematics and science more effectively. Comprising 11 member countries at its inception, the association has since continuously expanded its network and is now spread across 34 countries in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the years, the association has fostered inter-regional partnership and close network of peers whereby good practices and experiences can be shared by all members. I am told of the active exchange of information and mutual visits taking place among the members of SMASE-WECSA in addition to the annual regional conferences and other formal activities. Overall, the teaching and learning skills of the teachers in each country seem to be showing steady progress. I would like to congratulate the members of SMASE-WECSA on its success so far. I am delighted to hear that, by next year, “SMASE-WECSA” is set to develop into “SMASE-Africa”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Zambia hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> regional conference in 2007 and, this time, is hosting a Technical Workshop for the first time. Zambia has been a central member of SMASE-WECSA since the formation of the association and has been serving as the chair of the association for the past seven years. I very much appreciate Zambia’s valuable involvement in SMASE-WECSA.

This Technical Workshop offers the participants a good opportunity to learn from others’ experiences. While a majority of member countries have adopted in-service teacher training based on the “cascading system”, Zambia has taken an alternative school-based approach. I hope the participants from other countries will gain a lot from Zambia’s experiences.

Zambia’s education sector is faced with several challenges and there is a strong need for increase in the number of classrooms and teachers and improvement of the teaching capacity of teachers. The Government of Zambia has been making commendable efforts to cope with those challenges, placing education as one of the top national priorities.

Japan has assisted Zambia's efforts in various forms. We have been dispatching Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) teachers since 1981. Since 2005, JICA has cooperated in teacher training projects in Zambia. The "SMASTE" (Project for the Strengthening of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education) was carried out from 2008 to 2011 and its successor project called "STEPS" (Strengthening Teacher's Performance and Skills through School-Based Continuing Professional Development) is now ongoing since 2011. The STEPS is poised to benefit more than 72,000 teachers countrywide. Furthermore, since last year, Japan has been supporting Zambia's education sector in the form of budget support.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the beginning of June, Japan hosted the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V). Delegations from 51 African nations, including 39 Heads of State and Government, participated in the conference and discussed policy directions pertaining to African development over the next five years. The discussions were based on the three interrelated core themes of "Robust and Sustainable Economy", "Inclusive and Resilient Society" and "Peace and Stability", aiming to keep Africa's current economic growth on a stable path and to extend the benefits of development to all strata of society.

Evidently, in order for Africa to achieve sustainable and equitable development, building the capacity of the youth and creating jobs for them is of utmost importance. Under the "Yokohama Declaration 2013", the outcome document of the TICAD V, education is set out as one of the six strategic priority areas for the next five years. Japan on its part is firmly committed to making every effort in assisting the provision of quality education to children across Africa. One of Japan's focuses in education will continue to be the pursuit of strengthening mathematics and science education.

In closing, I wish all of you success of the workshop. I am confident it will lead to further strengthening of the capacity of education practitioners and policy makers toward self-reliant development in education, thereby contributing to development of the human resources who will bear the future of Africa.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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