REMARKS BY H.E. MR. AKIO EGAWA
AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY FOR
MOBILE SCIENCE LABORTORY KITS
AT NATIONAL SCIENCE CENTRE, LUSAKA, 8th AUG, 2013

Hon. Dr. John Phiri, M.P., Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education,
H. E. Mr. Finbar O'Brien, Ambassador of Ireland to the Republic of Zambia,
Distinguished Officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia,
Representatives of Civil Society Organisations, Mr. Yoshihide Teranishi, Resident Representative of JICA Zambia Office,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today on behalf of the Government of Japan at the launching ceremony for mobile science laboratory kits.

Education is a foundation for socio-economic development of any nation and the strengthening of teaching expertise of teachers plays a pivotal role in the improvement of the quality of education. The Government of the Republic of Zambia rightly attaches great importance to science education as it is one of the pillars of socio-economic development. This is articulated not only in the Sixth National Development Plan, but also in the National Implementation Framework, which gives priority to the teaching of science, mathematics and technology subjects in educational institutions at all levels.

In alignment with Zambia's development policies and programs, the Government of Japan prioritizes education, especially science and mathematics education, in its development cooperation policy for Zambia.

Allow me to give you a brief overview of Japan's cooperation in Zambia's

education sector. Japan has been dispatching Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) teachers to Zambia since 1981under the auspices of JICA. 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) has been ongoing since 2011. "STEPS" is now 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. Japan contributed approximately 3 million US dollars to the education sector pool fund last year and is contributing the same amount this year through Grant Aid for Poverty Reduction Strategy, known as the "PRS" Grant.

Honourable Minister, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

About one million US dollars have been dispensed from the education sector pool fund for the production of the 1,010 mobile science laboratory kits. Each of the ten provinces will get 100 mobile science laboratory kits. The kits will be distributed to secondary schools in each province, benefitting over 400,000 students at some 200 secondary schools. In addition, ten kits will be supplied to teacher training colleges.

Teaching of science would be most effective with a combination of theoretical and practical, experiment-oriented lessons. A survey carried out in 2012 indicated that 65% of schools surveyed did not have well-equipped conventional laboratories. However, it would not be easy to create and maintain well-equipped standard science laboratories in all schools in Zambia. A solution seemed to lie in the introduction of mobile science laboratory kits produced by the National Science Centre (NSC). The kits bring together the essence of ingenious ideas as they are compact, portable and affordable, and include a complete range of equipment necessary for practical science experiments. I trust that the use of these mobile science laboratory kits will significantly enhance the practical aspects of science teaching and learning at secondary schools.

Honourable Minister, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan is not new to the NSC. The Japanese Government dispatched two JICA senior volunteers to the NSC from 2002 to 2007 to provide the expertise required for the design of appropriate teaching and learning aids in math and science. The Japanese volunteers helped create the mobile science laboratory kits, using locally available materials and conducted demonstration experiments at workshops and seminars at some schools. They also helped produce handbooks on how to use the mobile science laboratory kits, which were circulated to schools around the country.

The demonstrational use of the mobile science kits has shown positive outcomes. Significant improvements were recorded in the science examination results among Grade 9 students after the demonstration experiments.

Honourable Minister, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident the introduction of the mobile science laboratory kits will significantly augment science teaching and learning nationwide. The future development of Zambia depends on students and the youths. It is my sincere hope that enhancement of quality education for them through the introduction of mobile science laboratory kits will accelerate the overall social and economic development of Zambia. It is also my hope that through cooperation like this, Japan-Zambia friendship will further be strengthened.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.