

REMARKS BY MR. HIDEKI YAMAJI
CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES AD INTÉRIM
OF THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN ZAMBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXCHANGE OF NOTES
FOR THE GRANT AID FOR POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY
FOR EDUCATION SECTOR POOL FUND
LUSAKA, 20th MARCH, 2013

Hon. Alexander B. Chikwanda, MP, Minister of Finance,

Hon. David Mabumba, MP, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education

Distinguished Officials of the Government of the Republic of Zambia,

Mr. Yoshihide Teranishi, Resident Representative of JICA Zambia Office, and,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today, on behalf of the Ambassador of Japan, His Excellency Mr. Akio Egawa, at the signing ceremony for the Exchange of Notes for the Grant Aid for Poverty Reduction Strategy, known as the “PRS” Grant. Last year, the Government of Japan made the first tranche of this budget support to the education sector pool fund, for the first time in Zambia, and in fact the first time in this continent.

This year’s disbursement marks the second occasion that the Government of Japan extends 300 million Yen, or approximately 3 million US Dollar. Traditionally, Japan has been engaging in its Official Development Assistance in the form of project type assistance, reflecting Japan’s own experience of being the recipient of economic assistance in the past. It is therefore a relatively new approach for us to provide assistance by way of budgetary support. Taking this opportunity, please allow me to explain to you the background of our new initiative.

Japan values the importance of the Third National Implementation Framework of the Education Sector, or NIF III, under the Sixth National Development Plan. We appreciate the vision held by the Sixth National Development Plan, and pledge continued support to the endeavours of the Government of Zambia in this respect. In particular, the area of “teacher education”, associated with capacity development of teachers through “lesson study”, is an area of utmost priority, which aims to enable the pupils to obtain quality education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To assist achievement of quality education, the Government of Japan has been extending its assistance in various forms. We have been dispatching Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) teachers since 1981. Since 2005, Japan has also been assisting teacher training through JICA technical cooperation projects named “SMASTE” (project for the Strengthening of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education) and “STEPS” (Strengthening Teacher’s Performance and Skills through School-Based Continuing Professional Development). Under STEPS, all provinces will be covered to benefit more than 72,000 teachers all over the country, against 3 provinces in SMASTE. It is pleasing to hear that these projects are being highly acclaimed by the Government of Zambia.

In addition, in light of the above-mentioned achievements, and, upon request, a JICA education policy advisor has been attached to the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education. The policy advisor is expected to assist in the development of strategies for tackling various challenges that the education sector is faced with. It is my hope that, the strong synergy produced by the STEPS project, contribution by the policy adviser and the budget support, will facilitate attainment of quality education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following the two consecutive disbursements to the sector pool fund, Japan, this year, will place emphasis on review and evaluation of the outcome of our assistance, with a view to assess the effectiveness of our new initiative. Meanwhile, the steady implementation and the positive outcome of the NIFIII is expected under the ownership of the Government of Zambia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The aforementioned initiatives by Japan are based upon the global frameworks on aid and development effectiveness including the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Declaration. In light of the Mutual Accountability Framework and the Joint Financing Arrangement in the Education Sector, concluded between the Ministry of Education and Cooperating Partners last year, Japan will proactively engage itself in aid coordination and aid effectiveness while ensuring mutual accountability and transparency with regard to its budget support.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) will be held from 1st to 3rd June in Yokohama, Japan. Since 1993, the Government of Japan has co-hosted TICAD summit meetings every five years. TICAD has served as the most significant, inclusive multilateral policy forum on African Development at the highest level. The policy discussions through TICAD process, based on the concept of “ownership and partnership”, have played important catalyst roles for the formation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), among others. TICAD V will be pillared on three main themes, namely, “Robust and Sustainable Economy”, “Inclusive and Resilient Society”, and “Peace and Stability in Africa”. Guided by the mutually agreed priorities at TICAD V, Japan will endeavour to strengthen its cooperation with Zambia in such sectors as education, agriculture, energy and private sector development, which will provide an enabling environment for economic and social development.

Education is without doubt key to successful economic and social development. An educated population is the backbone on which a nation can rely for its economic growth and sustained development. Japan has learned and demonstrated this in its own history of industrialisation. I would like to reiterate my earnest hope that this PRS Grant will continue to bring about significant improvement of education in Zambia, thereby enhancing the country’s overall economic and social development. I am certain that the provision of this grant will enhance the cordial relations between Japan and Zambia.

Thank you very much for your attention.

(END)