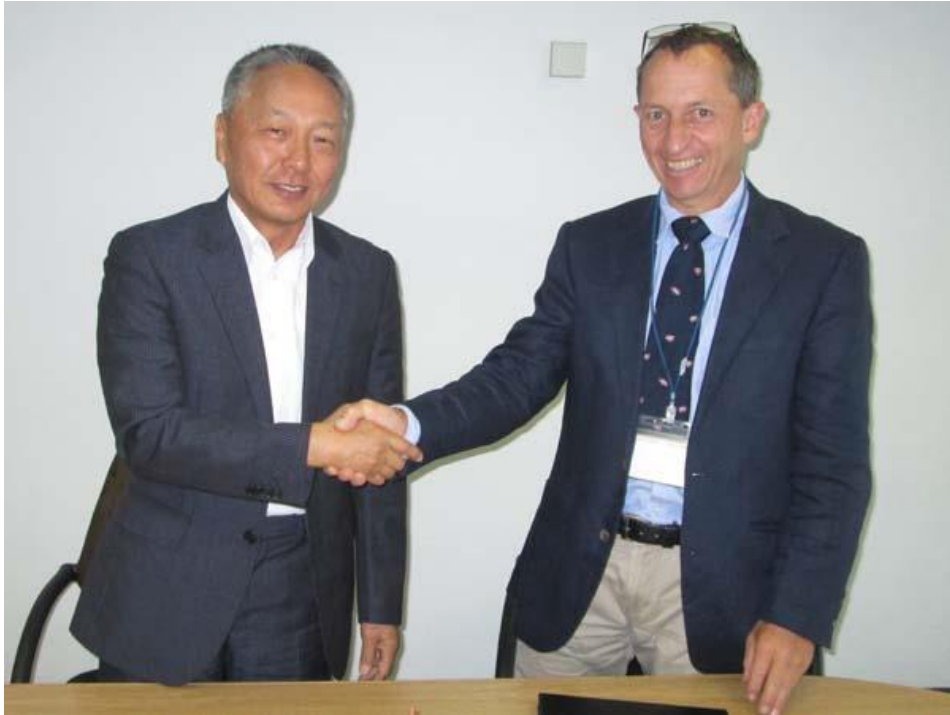


## JAPAN TO FUND DEMINING ACTIVITIES IN ZIMBABWE



The Embassy of Japan has today extended a grant of eight hundred and fifty-three thousand, six hundred and seven dollars (USD853,607) to an international NGO, The HALO Trust for the implementation of “The Project for Mine Clearance in the Northeastern Area of Zimbabwe”. The Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr Yonezo Fukuda and Mr Tom Dibb, Programme Manager of The HALO Trust signed the contracts formalising the grant.

The HALO Trust has received a similar grant from the Embassy last March in the amount of USD 864,153 for the start-up of the operation for survey of the minefields and demining activities. With today’s grant, The HALO Trust will be able to expand the exercise to Mudzi besides Mount Darwin district. The project has employed some 90 local staff, comprising manual demining sections and survey teams. Having had intensive training, they are running daily operations.

The impact of landmine explosions in these districts has had a devastating impact on the local community. Some houses and schools are right beside the minefields. Livestock fatalities occur on a regular basis. The project will have a very positive impact on locals who will be able to enjoy freedom of movement.

The Government of Japan has successfully partnered with The HALO Trust in landmine clearance projects in former theatres of conflict such as Mozambique, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. At the ceremony, the Ambassador Mr Fukuda praised The HALO Trust of its long and successful history of demining operations to improve human security.

He continued, ‘the Government of Zimbabwe has taken the mine issue seriously and worked closely with partner organisations like The HALO Trust. We are honoured to back such sincere efforts’.

Zimbabwe is one of the most affected countries due to the area and density of landmines. According to the Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre, so far more than 1,550 have died and approximately 2,000 people have been injured, while a number of cattle have been lost. As a signatory of the Ottawa Convention, Zimbabwe has the obligation to provide detailed demining plans by 2015.

Established in 1988, The HALO Trust is the largest humanitarian organisation for mine clearance around the world. It has the mandate from the Government to clear mines in Zimbabwe's northeast areas along the border with Mozambique. It stretches from Musengezi to Rwenya, Rushinga and Mukumbura, in total amount 139km<sup>2</sup>. These areas were reported to be extensively mines during the Zimbabwe's liberation war.