

Message by Ambassador Tanaka on the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday

The 23rd of February is the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, who will be 61 years old this year. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty the Emperor on celebrating his birthday this year, despite the difficult situation caused by the worldwide spread of COVID-19.

If it were possible, I would have been honoured to host a reception in Harare to celebrate the Emperor's birthday, but unfortunately we have decided not to hold one this year due to the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The spread of COVID-19 is a common hardship, not only for people in Zimbabwe, but also for people the world over, including in Japan. I hope that we can overcome this difficult situation by working together.

The annual Emperor's Birthday Celebration is also an opportunity for us to deepen our friendly relations with the people of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is blessed with abundant agricultural and mining resources and has great potential. In this regard, I believe it is important for Japan to continue to cooperate with Zimbabwe in its development. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the recent development of friendly relations between Zimbabwe and Japan. For example, we have recently decided to provide various kinds of humanitarian assistance, such as emergency food assistance, to the most vulnerable through international organisations. In addition, we are providing assistance in various other fields, such as in healthcare we are providing medical and hospital equipment to support the country's COVID-19 response, and in infrastructure development we are improving a road section of the North-South Corridor. Japan will continue to provide assistance that contributes to the development of Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe Japan Friendship Association or ZijaFA was established two years ago and has been deepening our relationship with Japan-loving Zimbabweans. The president of ZijaFA, Mr Jabangwe, and all the members are working hard to promote relations between our two countries. As a result, Zimbabweans are asking for more information about Japan. I would like to make further efforts in this regard. In particular, the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are scheduled to be held from July to September this year, and I would like to make use of this occasion to greatly increase the interest in Japan shown by the people of Zimbabwe.

In addition, TICAD 8 (the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development) is scheduled to be held in Tunisia in 2022, aiming to strengthen economic and business ties. I would like to use this conference as a means to promote economic relations and development cooperation between Zimbabwe and Japan. One can see many Japanese cars on the road in Zimbabwe, and I assume that the people of Zimbabwe have high

expectations of Japanese products. I believe it is important that these expectations materialise into the development of economic relations between our two countries.

Finally, as one who has been involved in environmental issues, I would like to use my experience in this field to promote the exchange of information and knowledge on tackling environmental issues currently facing Zimbabwe.

In any case, it is essential that the COVID-19 pandemic be brought under control as soon as possible and that our lives return to normal. Finally, on this occasion of the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, I hope for the further promotion of friendly relations between Zimbabwe and Japan.

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Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe
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