

Message from Ambassador Tanaka on the Occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday

Today, the 23rd of February, is the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, who has turned sixty-two. I would like to join all the Japanese people in expressing my heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty.

On this occasion, it would have been my honour to host an official reception at my residence. However, regrettably for the second year running, we have decided against hosting one, due to the need to put the health of all our guests paramount. I very much hope that by next year, the COVID-19 situation will be fully under control and we can celebrate properly.

This past year has been very difficult and challenging for all of us. I would like to extend my heartfelt sympathies to those who have lost loved ones and are facing severe difficulties in their lives due to this pandemic. I would also like to thank and express my profound respect to all the doctors and healthcare workers on the frontlines.

Japan's cooperation with Zimbabwe is conducted with a view to supporting the country's sustainable development, so that it achieves economic growth and transition of its society and economy. With regard to COVID-19, Japan is supporting the health sector, such as through provision of medical equipment and cold chain equipment as the "Last One Mile Support" to ensure vaccines reach everyone, as well as the 5S-KAIZEN-TQM project. In terms of improving regional connectivity, the North-South Corridor road rehabilitation project was completed in May last year, and a preparatory study for a new section is currently underway. And in terms of improving agricultural productivity, JICA's ZIM-SHEP project is proceeding well.

In addition, Japan continues to support ensuring human security for vulnerable people by providing food assistance, improving the educational environment and addressing gender inequality, through UN agencies and international organisations. And at the small-scale grassroots level, Japan is providing support in projects implemented by local NGOs.

I am pleased that the Zimbabwe Japan Friendship Association or ZiJaFA is continuing to deepen friendship between the people of Zimbabwe and Japan, with various activities being held not only in the field of business but also that of culture, such as

ikebana demonstrations, Japanese language lessons and Japanese martial arts tournaments. I hope that we will be back to having many more face-to-face activities and meetings soon.

Last year, Japan welcomed Team Zimbabwe at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We all cheered the Zimbabwean athletes who did very well in their respective sports of athletics, golf, rowing and swimming.

This year, the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or TICAD8, will be held in August. The Conference will aim to set out a pathway for development looking ahead to the post-COVID era, so that Africa emerges stronger from the current difficulties. I hope this Conference will be a means of promoting economic relations and development cooperation between Zimbabwe and Japan.

Finally, I wish you good health and all the best in 2022, and I look forward to meeting you all in person this year! On this occasion of the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, allow me once again to express my desire for the further deepening and expansion of exchanges between Zimbabwe and Japan.

23 February 2022
Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe
Satoshi Tanaka