

## **P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

**March 18, 2013**

### **JAPAN TO FUND DEMINING ACTIVITIES IN MUKUMBURA**

The Embassy of Japan has today extended a grant of USD 864,153 (eight hundred and sixty-four thousand, one hundred fifty-three dollars) to an international NGO, The Halo Trust, for the implementation of “The Project for Mine Clearance in Mashonaland Central Province”.

The Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr Yonezo Fukuda, and Mr Tom Dibb, Programme Manager of The Halo Trust, signed the contract formalising the grant at the Embassy.

The project is for landmine clearance activities in the Mukumbura area in the northeast of the country along the border with Mozambique. This area was heavily mined by Rhodesian security forces during Zimbabwe’s liberation war.

It has three broad objectives – (1) to create a safer environment for local communities, their children and livestock; (2) to return land to agricultural production and (3) to assist the Government with its long-term planning and to meet its obligations to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Since 1980, it is estimated that there have been at least 1,500 casualties of landmine deaths in the area, 25 in the last year including a young girl last December. Some communities are living right beside mine belts. Livestock fatalities occur on a regular basis.

At the ceremony, the Ambassador mentioned that: ‘through our support, I sincerely hope that such tragedies would not happen, and the local people, particularly children, could move freely without any fear’. ‘In the future, we look forward to a world where the production of indiscriminate munitions such as landmines and cluster bombs will be forever banned’, he also addressed.

The Government of Japan has successfully partnered with The Halo Trust in landmine clearance projects in other countries, such as Mozambique and Sri Lanka.

**End**