

'Walking Together, Building a Future Together'



I am Toshimitsu Motegi, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is a great honour for me to have the opportunity to visit Zambia, an important partner with whom Japan shares values and principles. This is the first visit by a Japanese Foreign Minister in 42 years, and whilst I feel honoured by this, I am also keenly aware of its significance at a time when the international situation is becoming increasingly challenging and the importance of cooperation between Japan and Zambia is growing.

Zambia achieved its independence in 1964; that same year, the Tokyo Olympics—a symbol of Japan's post-war recovery—were held in Tokyo. Did you know that on the very day Zambia achieved its independence, the Zambian flag was raised on the international stage for the first time at the closing ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics, held on 24 October 1964? This episode symbolises the deep bonds between Japan and Zambia. Having marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2024, our two nations remain bound by a strong partnership based on

mutual trust. Last year, beginning with President Hichilema's first visit to Japan in February, we welcomed many Zambian dignitaries to Japan on occasions such as the Osaka-Kansai Expo and the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9), held in Yokohama.

In 1993, shortly after the end of the Cold War, Japan was among the first to recognise Africa's potential and its importance within the international community, and, together with African nations, launched the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). Since then, Japan has continued to work alongside African nations to forge a path towards the future guided by the fundamental principles of African ownership and partnership with the international community.

At the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 6), held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2016—the first time the event had been hosted in Africa—the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe proposed the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)'. This is a vision of connecting Asia and Africa, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, founded upon universal values such as 'freedom', 'openness', 'diversity', 'inclusivity' and 'the rule of law' and realising stability and prosperity across the entire region. Prime Minister Takaichi has stated her intention to evolve this vision by emphasising 'autonomy' and 'resilience' as key concepts. Now, ten years on from its inception and amidst a world in turmoil, the FOIP is becoming increasingly significant as a vital compass pointing the way forward for Japan and Africa.

Amidst this Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, Japan has been promoting various initiatives with Zambia to support the country's economic development and improve the lives of its people. More than 3,400 experts and volunteers have been dispatched from Japan to Zambia. In recent years, Japan has

been providing assistance aimed at utilising mineral resources and promoting diversified and resilient economic growth to support initiatives based on Zambia's long-term national plan, 'Vision 2030', and its medium-term development plan.

The critical minerals, oil and other natural resources of the African continent are essential not only for the economic security of the international community, including Japan, but they also hold the key to Africa's own sustainable growth. Zambia, with its rich mineral resources, particularly copper, is playing an increasingly significant role. Japan is committed to working hand in hand with Zambia, through both public and private sector engagement, to ensure that Zambia's mining industry develops in a way that enriches the lives of the Zambian people.

For example, in 2025, Japan decided to provide equipment to support ore analysis and research in relation to the utilisation of mineral resources. This cooperation is expected to enhance Zambia's ore analysis capabilities and promote human resource development, thereby attracting investment in mineral resource exploration and mineral resources. Furthermore, through the 'Kizuna Program'—a long-term training programme aimed at human resource development in the mining sector—11 Zambian experts have received training in Japan by 2025. Japan also places great importance on cooperation relating to heavy metal contamination countermeasures, and is working to strengthen responsible mineral resource supply chains in Africa.

We are also undertaking initiatives aimed at diversifying and strengthening Zambia's economy beyond the mining sector. Japan is focusing on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and improving health and medical services. Furthermore, in the education sector, since 2024, we have been supporting the provision of science laboratory equipment and construction of laboratories at secondary schools, with the aim of improving the quality of science and mathematics education and nurturing the next generation of talent to support the future of Zambia. In the agricultural sector, we believe the diversification of crops and their value addition are key pillars underpinning Zambia's

economic growth. Since 2022, Japan has been actively supporting the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) in the development of improved rice seeds and the development of irrigation facilities, thereby boosting rice productivity and enhancing food security.

Furthermore, Zambia is also a key regional transport hub in the southern Africa "landlinked" region. At last year's TICAD 9, Japan announced its intention to pursue comprehensive cooperation towards the development of the Nacala Corridor. We aim to support the development of transportation infrastructure and industrial development in the areas surrounding the Nacala Corridor—linking Zambia and Malawi to the Indian Ocean through the Port of Nacala in Mozambique—thereby strengthening global supply chains. In this context, Zambia remains an important partner for Japan.

The National Diet of Japan (the role of the National Assembly in Zambia) is currently in session, and the Japan-Zambia Investment Agreement, which was signed in Tokyo last February, is scheduled to be deliberated. We hope that upon its entry into force, the Agreement will further promote Japanese investment in Zambia and serve as a catalyst for building a more diverse relationship between Japan and Zambia in the fields of trade and investment.

Turning our eyes to the global landscape, amidst significant structural changes, as the international order is profoundly shaken, the importance of African nations and Japan joining hands once again, strengthening mutual ties and deepening our cooperation has never been greater. Zambia has been actively engaged in peacekeeping and conflict resolution in the Southern African region. I hope that Zambia's expertise in these areas will serve as the foundation for cooperation between Japan and Zambia that extends beyond the economic sphere.

TICAD 10 is scheduled to be held in Africa. Under the evolved FOIP vision, Japan will continue to advance the path of further development together with Zambia and African nations as a trusted partner.

The Author is Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs