



STATEMENT

by

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at the

**LAUNCH OF THE JICA-SADC PROJECT ON CONSERVATION AND
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

GABORONE, BOTSWANA

23RD FEBRUARY 2016

**Your Excellency, Mr. Masahiro Onishi, the Japanese Ambassador to Botswana
Distinguished Invited Guests**

Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon to you all!

Your Excellency, allow me to welcome you all to SADC Secretariat on this auspicious occasion of the launch of the SADC Project on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Southern Africa, which is supported by the Government of Japan, through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The launch follows our long term cooperation and a very successful mission that I undertook to Japan in November 2015, where I met both the Government and JICA Officials.

Let me first thank your Excellency and your delegation for making time to launch this project amid your busy schedules. I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to your Excellency for the cordial relationship that exists between SADC and the Government of Japan. I in particular wish to thank the Government of the Republic of Japan for the technical and financial support provided to this Project which will run for a period of 5 years. This project is the first SADC regional project supported by the Government of Japan and therefore marks the beginning of a new relationship.

Distinguished delegates,

Forests which cover 40% of the SADC's total land area of 10 Million Km², and an important natural resource for the Region. They support national economies as well as livelihoods of majority of people of the SADC Region. Forests provide food, timber and non-timber products, domestic wood energy, shelter, medicine, habitat for wildlife and promotion of tourism. Forests are particularly important in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere which is one of the mitigation measures of climate change. This resource also protects several river basins.

The project will specifically develop the capacity of SADC Member States to facilitate the sustainable management and conservation of forest resources. This is in line with the Forestry Protocol which came into force in 2009. In order to implement the Forestry Protocol, the region developed a Forestry Strategy for 2010-2020. The aim of the Strategy is “to facilitate co-operation among Member States to promote the active protection, management and sustainable use of forest resources.

Your Excellency, let me emphasize that the Protocol on Forestry is part of pillar 4 of the revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) which pertains to the Special programmes of regional dimension. This includes Food Security and Trans-boundary Natural Resources. The project will specifically strengthen the SADC Secretariat’s coordination role, develop the capacity of Member States and the Secretariat in the areas of forest information systems, integrated fire management, and support participatory forest management. It is my hope that the project will add value to efforts being undertaken by Member States in conserving forests, reducing poverty and sustaining livelihoods of people particularly in the rural areas.

Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to conclude my remarks by reiterating my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government and People of Japan for the financial and technical support provided to SADC. It is my belief that this marks a new and strengthened cooperation and collaboration between our two institutions.

I thank you!