

23rd March 2016

**Speech of the Ambassador of Japan to Botswana
At the Launching Ceremony of the Project for Forest Conservation and
Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Southern Africa.**

Please let me begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to your Excellency Dr. Stergomena Tax and all colleagues of Department of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources working for the Project for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Resources.

Japanese government and JICA have been closely working with SADC since 1996, when the first JICA expert was dispatched to the SADC secretariat. Today, we proudly announce a new project, the Project for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Resources. It is the first technical cooperation scheme between SADC and JICA, which will be implemented by three Japanese experts.

SADC Secretariat, SADC member states, and Japanese government have been aware of the importance of forests in the SADC area. There are abundant of forest area in the SADC region and timber from the forest has been utilized for industries, trades, and domestic use. However, those resources are limited and over the 15 years between 1990 and 2005, 11 million hectares of the forest cover was lost mainly from deforestation and forest fire. Today, it is an urgent and significant challenge to manage and control forest in order to preserve the precious resources.

The Forest Project is expected to contribute to the implementation of the SADC Forestry Strategy 2010-2020. Through the technical assistance for the national forest conservation programs of SADC member states, I hope the Japanese experts will firmly support SADC's forest conservation initiatives and transfer their knowledge and skills to their counterparts. I also expect that our Forest Project will be one of the signature projects of SADC FANR (Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources) achieving international standout in the field of the sustainable forest management.

In this opportunity, I also would like to announce about the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, TICAD. On 27th and 28th in coming August, Japanese government will convene TICAD VI in Nairobi. I expect that TICAD VI will be a valuable opportunity for SADC and Japan to strengthen relationship and seek for further collaboration for the regional development.

Thank you very much for your attention.