

Address by H.E. Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, Prime Minister of Japan at the Opening Session of the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV)



Photos: Cabinet Public Relations Office

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Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Country Representatives, Leaders of International Organizations, ladies and gentlemen,

There is no higher honor for me, and indeed no greater pleasure, than to be able to address you this morning on behalf of the host country. I would like to extend my warmest welcome

to all of you.

Our host city Yokohama has always served as Japan's gateway to the world ever since Japan started down its path to modernization 150 years ago. In hosting the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), there is truly no other city as appropriate as Yokohama. Allow me to express my most sincere thanks to Mayor Hiroshi Nakada and also to the people of Yokohama, who have been engaged in all-out, tireless efforts toward the success of this conference.

Today we are honored to have representatives from 52 African nations and from many Asian nations and donor countries. In addition, a number of international organizations, special guests, and representatives of NGOs are also participating. With all these participants, this TICAD IV has become a truly historic event.

TICAD is a Conference in which the process itself is extremely valuable. Proof of this can be found in the fact that thousands of people have invested their precious time in the collaborative work preparing for this Conference. It is for this reason, I believe, that our Conference has attracted so many participants.

With TICAD IV having received such enthusiastic attention even at the preparatory stages, I would be remiss not to refer to the historic significance of this meeting.

If I were to liken the history of African development to a great narrative, then what we are about to do now is to open to a new page, titled the "century of African growth." In the future, Africa will become a powerful engine driving the growth of the world. Through preparations for TICAD IV, I believe that we have come to share a common intuition about Africa's prospects for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, this new African history that we will create together will be a history of growth. Peace and security are fundamentals for bringing about growth. Upon this basis, it is necessary to have private investment. The time has come for the countries of Africa to adopt as their own a model that led to success in post-war Japan and many other Asian countries. That is to say, investment makes the economy grow, providing the momentum for further new investment, and thus encourages self-sustaining growth.

Here at this juncture, Japan wants to walk alongside the African people, shoulder to shoulder.

In order to boost the momentum for African growth, the most important thing is the development of infrastructure. In particular, the experiences of Japan and other Asian countries tell us that improvements in transportation infrastructure play a critical role in attracting private investment.

While there is progress now underway in Africa's road network, there are still many missing links, and this is one of the reasons why it has not yet reached a point where it sufficiently performs the functions of a full-fledged network. The Government of Japan wishes to engage in efforts to diligently join these unconnected road networks. Japan also wishes to combine these efforts with improvements to ports in order to form a network - a network that will enable Africa as a whole to move forward with greater dynamism.

With that in mind, the first pledge that I would like to make today is that over the next five

years, Japan will proactively and flexibly provide up to 4 billion US dollars of soft loans to Africa. It will certainly help increase momentum for infrastructure improvements. Japan intends to do its utmost in this area in cooperation with the donors of the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA).

The reason I assert that the present time provides such a good opportunity for the building of infrastructure is that public safety and political conditions in Africa have improved so much in recent years. This resulted in momentum all throughout Africa to advance regional integration and to bring the economy of scale to Africa. Japan will act in cooperation with the AU, NEPAD, and Regional Economic Communities to support regional partnerships and integration in Africa.

The infrastructure that Japan is to build must be "the people's infrastructure," bringing prosperity to communities and the people living there.

Networks of road systems fulfill their intended purpose only when they transport people and goods smoothly. Therefore our objective must be to enable crossing and inspections at national borders as quickly as possible. The Government of Japan hopes to assist with building "one-stop border posts," which are facilities designed to make crossing national borders more efficient in the areas of customs and immigration procedures. Japan hopes to assist in training the personnel who will work there.

Activities by private companies are crucial for African growth. This is another reason why it is imperative for us to improve infrastructure. Japanese companies will have greater interest in Africa as infrastructure is enhanced. When direct investment from Japanese companies increases, transfers of technology and managerial know-how will also increase accordingly. If we are able to utilize Africa's plentiful resources more fully by harnessing Japan's technologies, this will surely be a major trigger for growth and benefit Africa.

For that reason, the Japanese government will implement measures to promote the activities of Japanese companies in Africa while it improves African infrastructure.

One initiative I would like to promote here is the dispatch of a large-scale economic mission. After this summer, Japan will send a joint mission comprised of leaders in the public and private sectors.

To make it easier for Japanese companies to develop their businesses in Africa, Japan will be reinforcing trade insurance. Moreover, we will be inaugurating within the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) the Facility for African Investment. This Facility will directly finance businesses in African countries and guarantee the financing provided by Japanese banks for businesses in Africa. Financial assistance for Africa through the JBIC, including this newly-established JBIC Facility for African Investment, will be on a scale of 2.5 billion US dollars over the next five years. Through such public-private collaborative activity, we are aiming to double Japanese private investment in Africa.

Next, please allow me to touch briefly on the issue of agriculture. In order to fully ensure growth in Africa, the development of agriculture is extremely important, as some two-thirds of the total population of Africa is engaged in it.

As Africa seeks to achieve its own Green Revolution, I would like to put out a call for action,

aiming to double the current rice production output of 14 million tons over the next ten years. Japan used to be an agricultural country and rice continues to be the mainstay of our diet. With a wealth of agricultural experiences, Japan is willing to cooperate with various countries and international organizations in the areas of developing irrigation systems, improving the varieties of crops raised, and fostering extension workers in the field of agriculture.

We are deeply concerned by the fact that many African countries are in great difficulty as a result of the recent sharp rise in food prices. The Government of Japan recently announced an emergency food assistance package equivalent to 100 million US dollars. I will promise you here that a significant portion of this amount will be targeted to Africa. On top of this, Japan is further considering various assistance measures, including relief measures for groups that have newly fallen into poverty as well as measures to support crop planting for next year and the year after.

I have been speaking thus far about the importance of infrastructure, private investment, and agricultural production for growth. Next, I would like to touch on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This year marks the halfway point as we work to achieve the MDGs. It is impossible for us to close our eyes to the difficulties our African friends are facing, including the problem of infectious diseases. Japan intends to extend a hand to our African friends who are striving hard. Let all of us renew our determination to achieve the MDGs. On that basis, I would like to touch on several measures that Japan would like to undertake.

Africa is facing a shortage of as many as 1.5 million health workers. In response to this, Japan will train one hundred thousand people in Africa over the next five years as health workers.

Africa also has a population issue. We consider this issue one of the key themes of development. I have for some time chaired the dialogue among Asian and African national assembly members that share a common awareness of this issue and have continued my efforts to promote exchanges among these members.

The issue of population in Africa is one that must be addressed for the development of the economy and the stability of society. It has a profound effect on the attainment of the MDGs, with impacts on poverty, education, gender, the environment, and reproductive health.

Japan has something known as the "maternal and child health handbook," which has played a significant role in maintaining the health of pregnant women and children. This handbook has been introduced in Indonesia and other Asian countries and attained good results. I believe it would also be meaningful to expand the idea behind this handbook throughout Africa.

Recently in the area of health-related measures, I decided that Japan would contribute 560 million US dollars to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the coming years, starting in 2009, to support the fight against these three major infectious diseases. As you are aware, approximately 60 percent of the Global Fund's total assistance goes to sub-Saharan Africa.

In the fields of health or combating infectious diseases, Japan is also considering dispatching Japanese researchers to universities and research institutions in Africa. I would like for these

researchers to engage in joint research with young African researchers to find solutions for various issues. I would also like to announce that we will be convening a Japan-Africa Science and Technology Ministers' Meeting in autumn this year.

Next I want to touch upon the fact that Japan intends to reward persons who have been active in the fields of health or medical services in Africa through the "Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize." It was launched in honor of Dr. Noguchi, who died while researching yellow fever in Africa. The prize's first awards ceremony will be held this evening.

As yet another innovation, Japan will be organizing a new technical assistance corps of water specialists to be known as "W-SAT," or the "Water Security Action Team," which will be dispatched to work on the ground in African nations. This initiative is intended to provide access to water to as many African people as possible by sending specialists in underground water resources and water supply system management. I would ask you to envision the people of W-SAT working side by side with the people of Africa, drilling new wells and fixing broken water supply pipes.

In order to bring about the range of measures that I have announced thus far, we will need to take bold steps in our ODA. I pledge that by 2012--five years from now--Japan will have doubled its ODA to Africa, increasing it gradually over these years to achieve this target. Just a minute ago, I stated that Japan would be providing Japanese ODA loans of up to 4 billion US dollars to Africa to improve African infrastructure. In addition, I promise that Japan will double its grant aid and technical cooperation for Africa over the next five years. Moreover, Japan will coordinate with the international community, acting in good faith to address issues of debt relief for Africa.

Finally, I would like to touch on the issue of climate change, which will also be one of the major themes for discussion at the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit. I recently outlined a mechanism called the "Cool Earth Partnership." Under this Partnership, Japan intends to engage in assistance to developing countries, including African countries, that aim to achieve both greenhouse gas emissions reductions and economic growth in a compatible way. The scale of assistance is 10 billion US dollars over the course of five years, beginning this year.

Some countries in Africa have already launched policy consultations with Japan. I hope sincerely that the Cool Earth Partnership will be expanded across the entire African continent. Japan will be working in cooperation with other countries to formulate a post-2012 framework in which the major economies participate in a responsible manner, with a view to protecting Africa from the negative impacts of climate change.

The various views and ideas that I have shared with you today demonstrate that Japan wishes to work together with Africa in writing a great narrative of growth. In order to do that Japan hopes to share its insights and experiences to resolve issues such as health and sanitation and to encourage growth in Africa.

As a matter of course, both growth and development can be realized only through peace and security. Japan, as a "Peace Fostering Nation," intends to focus more on the consolidation of peace and peacebuilding in Africa. Japan will also pursue the reform of the United Nations Security Council so that the UN can carry out its role more effectively in the maintenance of peace in the international community, including in Africa.

As I conclude my remarks today, I would like to address Japan's fundamental approach to

African development. This can be summed up in the phrase "self-reliance and mutual cooperation."

For Japan, a country with virtually no underground resources to speak of, the most important type of resources is human resources. First, we give our children a thorough education. Then, we make them self-reliant. On that basis, they live in harmony together with others, pooling their abilities to deal with any difficulties that their friends might face. This is the principle of "self-reliance and mutual cooperation."

This fundamental approach held by the Japanese relates directly to the philosophy that has been a part of TICAD since its founding, namely "ownership" and "partnership."

Where there is no "ownership," which respects self-reliance, neither sustainable development nor growth is possible.

For Japan, the process of reconstruction after the Second World War taught us how important support from our friends is, and how much that support helped us in our reconstruction and development. This is the true nature of "partnership." This idea of partnership should be shared beyond Japan. I would like to see an exchange of insights and experiences between Africa and Asia, and I hope very much that we can build such partnerships.

So many Japanese have made efforts side by side with the people of Africa. In particular, approximately 11,000 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) have been dispatched to Africa over the years. This constitutes a truly tremendous track record. At this very moment there are 971 JOCVs working all around the African continent. More than half of these volunteers--570 of them--are women. I furthermore would like to increase the number of African students studying in Japan. I firmly believe that mutual exchanges of youth will form the foundation for the future of Japan and Africa.

Ownership and partnership--I am truly pleased to say that these key words of TICAD have become established as symbolic of African development itself.

Throughout its history, the TICAD process has represented the bright future and great potential of Africa. Now together with the countries of Africa, Japan is determined to make the 21st century the "century of African growth."

Thank you very much.