

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone, Foreign Minister of Japan
On the occasion of the Buffet Dinner**

**The G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit Follow-up International
Conference
on Global Action for Health System Strengthening**

3 November 2008, Tokyo

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all of you who gathered here today from various parts of the world.

It goes without saying that the current global financial crisis must be tackled as a matter of great urgency. However, in no way does this warrant leaving behind development – related challenges.

If we look around the world, every year 9.7 million children meet their untimely death before they reach the age of five. Every year, the lives of a half million women are lost due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. And every year, the three major infectious diseases of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria claim 5 million lives.

Behind these overwhelming figures are the lives and livelihoods of individuals, each and every one of them so precious and irreplaceable. A challenge to global health is a challenge to human security itself. I believe that Japan should exercise leadership and work together with you in finding a solution to these global issues.

At the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, Japan sent out a clear message about the imperative of addressing health system strengthening comprehensively in order to combat infectious diseases and improve maternal, newborn and child health. The G8 leaders agreed on this. The

international conference to follow up on this particular point, with the public and private sectors working in partnership, is a very important one indeed.

No matter how effective a medicine we may develop, how magnificent a hospital we may build, or how generous our financial contribution may be, lives cannot be saved unless health systems function properly. It is not going to be an easy task to put in place well-functioning health systems around the world with sufficient human resources, health policies based on appropriate data, and solid and sustainable financial resources.

I am delighted that leading figures in this field gathered here in Japan today to throw themselves into lively discussions over how to tackle this challenging issue. It is my sincere hope that your discussions will bear fruit as part of the follow-up to the Toyako Summit.

Thank you.