

Opening Remarks by Mr Kenji Hiramatsu,  
Deputy Director for Economic Affairs,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

- It is our great pleasure to be able to convene the Roundtable “Promoting Responsible International Investment in Agriculture” with the attendance of such a large number of distinguished participants. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to World Bank, FAO, IFAD and UNCTAD for their cooperation as co-sponsors of the event, and to the US Government for their offer to use the venue in token of their support to our initiative. I would also like to extend our warm welcome to all of you who make to this event, despite the fact that today might be the busiest day for people who engaged in the UN affairs.
- It is our regret that our Minister, Katsuya Okada, could not attend the meeting, due to a serious clash of schedule. On his behalf, I would like to make short opening remarks.
- Food security is a pressing global agenda. Last year’s food price hikes revealed the vulnerability of the international food system. In order to address the increasing hunger population and uncertainties about mid- to long term food supply-demand situation, we must increase aid and investment in the agricultural sector. This has been reiterated at various international fora, and in some developing countries, improvements have been witnessed. Foreign direct investment, among other things, has been playing an important role in strengthening the production capacities of developing countries, and should be further promoted.

- On the other hand, poorly executed investment that either use or source from large tracts of land could have unintended negative impacts in terms of political stability, social cohesion, human security, sustainable food production, household food security and environmental protection for the receiving country. Focusing on these risks, some people are criticizing the recent surge of interest in a large-scale agro-investment associated with land acquisitions in developing countries, as “land grabbing”.
- We believe: with a view to adequately addressing the opportunities and challenges posed by the recent phenomenon, we all need to promote responsible investment in agriculture that will achieve sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in receiving countries, while mitigating negative impacts that may accrue therefrom. Responsible investment in agriculture will harmonize and maximize the interests of receiving countries, local communities, and investors, thereby creating a “win-win-win” situation for all stakeholders.
- With this view in mind, Japan has called for the promotion of responsible international agro-investment, on the occasion of the G8 L’Aquila Summit. And today, as part of our initiative, we are hosting this event.
- Some people have asked me, “Why is Japan so keen on this issue?” I answer, “Why are we not? This issue could have profound implications for the future of global food security and world agriculture.”
- Japan is the largest net food-import country. And naturally the

realization of sustainable agricultural development in the world is one of our top priorities. This is why Japan has been no.1 or no.2 donor in agricultural ODA for decades.

- Japan also shares concerns with other food importing countries about the future stability of food supply. The concerns were prompted by the recent food price spike and ensuing proliferation of export restrictions. In addition to enhancing aid and investment in agriculture, we must work together to restore confidence in the international food market and trade.
- Another reason behind Japan's initiative is the fact that we have successful experiences in the field of international agricultural investment, most notably the case of development of the Cerrado region of Brazil. The Japan-Brazil cooperation contributed to the significant increase of soybeans production in the region.
- Finally, the Roundtable today is, as far as we are aware, the first major international meeting taking up this issue. The content of today's event is therefore attracting a lot of attention from all over the world. To meet the expectations, we are hoping that, active and forward-looking discussions will be made by the distinguished participants, particularly with regard to the principles and international framework to promote responsible international investment in agriculture. Together we can mark a robust first step towards a coordinated global response to this important issue.