

Remarks by H.E. Mr Katsuya Okada, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at TAC Meeting on 26 October, 2009

Today, Prime Minister Hatoyama delivered the general-policy speech at the two Houses of the Diet. Japan achieved the change of the government, and I felt the beginning of a new era of politics.

As the cabinet minister responsible for foreign policy of Japan, I have hoped to meet with Your Excellencies, Ambassadors from African Countries, as early as possible. Today, I am highly delighted to have an opportunity to exchange opinions with Your Excellencies concerning Hatoyama Administration's policy on Africa.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to explain two fundamental principles of Japan's policy on Africa.

The first principle is to provide assistance for development and growth of Africa.

Recently, Prime Minister Hatoyama clearly stated that Japan intends to continue and strengthen the TICAD process, in his address to the UN General Assembly. Hatoyama Administration will fulfil the commitment announced at TICAD IV without fail, which undertook to double Japan's ODA and provide assistance for doubling Japanese private investment to Africa by 2012.

On implementing the ODA, we retain our stance to emphasise boosting economic growth, consolidation of peace and good governance, addressing environment/climate-change issues, in addition to achieving MDGs and ensuring human security. Furthermore, in view of enhancing trade and investment relations between Japan and Africa, our government will closely cooperate with Japanese private companies and proactively provide support for their business activities.

I was informed that, during the preparation and follow-up process of TICAD conferences, members of African diplomatic Corps have been making great contributions by communicating Africa's voice to Japan and played a

role of constructive partners. I take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude.

The second principle is to contribute to peace and stability of Africa. Growth and development can never be achieved without peace and stability. Hatoyama Administration will play a proper role in the efforts to establish and consolidate peace, including Peace Keeping Operations(PKO). In this regard, I have recently revealed that our administration will proceed examination on the measures including amendment of the International Peace Cooperation Law, in order for Japan to make more active participation in PKO. In addition, we will be making greater contribution for the solution of conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, and other region. We will also strengthen cooperation with the African Union for this purpose.

I myself visited Darfur region of the Sudan in 2005 and surrounding areas of Lake Victoria of Kenya in 2006. During these trips, I had opportunities to see with my own eyes the tragedy of conflict, dire poverty and seriousness of HIV/AIDS, but at the same time, hard efforts of African people to overcome these challenges. In particular, I was great impressed by the active cooperation of AU member countries in Sudan. At that time, I strongly felt that these African issues are the challenges which the entire world is facing and need concerted efforts of the international community. That conviction is still unchanged.

After visiting Kenya, I contributed an article to Asahi Shimbun, and emphasised that we must tackle the issue of poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa, with sympathy as the same human beings.

I am resolved to strengthen our efforts to tackle African issues based on these two fundamental principles in cooperation with Your Excellencies. To that end, I would like to listen to Your Excellencies' valuable opinions now, as long as time permits.

(end)