

Speech by Mr. Katsuyuki Kawai,
Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan
on the occasion of the Fourth High-Level Group Meeting
on Education for All (EFA)
Brasilia
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Mr. Chairperson,

Since it is the Japanese delegation's first comment at this meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Japanese Government, my heartfelt appreciation to UNESCO as well as to the Government and the People of the Federative Republic of Brazil for hosting the Fourth High-Level Group Meeting on Education for All.

As you know, Japan has achieved modernization and economic development being greatly facilitated by an extensive investment in primary education. Japan adapted Western civilization without losing the "Japanese Way." This is largely attributed to the fact that there were already a large number of citizens with basic skills such as reading, abacus or calculation even in the Edo era, prior to the opening up the country. Community learning centers called "terakoya," operated for the children of all classes, played a critical role in education development at that time. The terakoya was an institution where community leaders invited children into their own residences or temples in order to teach them. This demonstrates that the understanding and the support of not only parents but also every single member of the

society are critical for promoting quality education for all. The National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan has been promoting the “World Terakoya Movement” since 1989. Since the start of the project, as many as 720,000 people in developing countries have learned to read, write and calculate. It is my sincere hope that this spirit of Terakoya will be widely shared.

Japan’s successful reconstruction of its nation after the Second World War was also made possible through investment in primary education. Severely damaged by air raids during the Second World War, most of the schools were destroyed. In Hiroshima which is my hometown, no school survived by the atomic bomb. Nevertheless, almost all primary and secondary school facilities had been rehabilitated within merely a few years after the war. Japanese people dared to allocate their limited resources to school reconstruction as a top priority,

Mr. Chairperson,

Japan, based on its own historical experiences, attaches importance on strong political commitments by the governments of developing countries when carrying out its international cooperation. Japan announced the “Basic Education for Growth Initiative – BEGIN” on the occasion of the Kananaskis Summit in 2002. BEGIN establishes Access, Quality, and Governance/Management, as the three pillars of Japan’s assistance for basic education. In 2002 alone, our cooperation based on BEGIN has provided as

many as 550,000 children in developing countries with access to education, through the construction of schools and other activities.

In order to improve the “quality” of education, which is the main theme of this meeting, one of the key elements is to innovate teaching method.

Since 1998, Japan has been providing assistance to Kenya for their secondary schools to transform the traditional “talk and chalk” teaching style to a more student centered style that promotes more observation and experiments in classrooms. The objective of the project is to foster students’ abilities to understand the principles of natural science by themselves. Lessons at schools resemble soap operas on TV. If the scenario is not interesting, the soap opera will be dull and the audience will switch to another channel. Likewise, if the lessons are not exciting and cannot provide students with the joy of discovery, students’ interests will be lost.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Japanese Government highly appreciates UNESCO’s role as leading agency in maintaining the world’s momentum of EFA, spearheaded by the distinguished leadership of Mr. Koichiro Matsuura. It is our sincere hope that UNESCO will further strengthen its efforts in realizing EFA goals through a close collaboration with other partners that are working in the field of education in developing countries. Japan will continue to actively support such efforts by UNESCO.

I would like to close my remarks by wishing this High-Level Group Meeting on Education for All much success.

Thank you very much.

Obrigado.