

Presentation by Mr. Yasuhiko Yokoi,
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- African countries are finding solutions to overcome various social challenges in order to achieve sound and sustainable growth. Inspired by the momentum, more and more Japanese corporations wish to contribute to the process by leveraging the power of their business and start taking actions.
- Such movement in the Japanese business is gaining momentum, but even greater velocity is awaited. Most of corporations are fully aware of the dynamism and enormous potentialities in Africa. But some factors still withhold them from advancing into the African market; anxiety arising from a lack of familiarity with the continent, and concerns about business environment represented by institutional and regulation issues. In this regard, there still are barriers too high for a company to overcome by its own effort alone. In order to break this impasse, private and public sectors in Japan must get together and all upon all the expertise and means to change the situation. Based on such brief, The Japan Business Council for Africa was launched in time for TICAD 7.
- Now, I would like to briefly outline what the Council is. The Japan Business Council for Africa is a standing body for the Japanese private and public sectors to discuss about Africa business. The member includes number of corporations with rich diversity in sector and size. From public sector, we have all the ministries and government agencies related to Africa policy of Japan, and the international organizations. The Council members hold cross-sector discussion about concrete measures necessary to promote business development from Japan to Africa, as well as expected efforts by the African country. The outcome will be shared with other stakeholders on the occasions of business dialogues among African countries and Japan like TICAD, so that the voice from the Council will lead to actions.
- The Council identified four specific themes, and organized working groups accordingly. The overarching principle behind the focus is “contributing to

problem-solving in Africa, by leveraging the power of the Japanese business”.

- Among the four themes are healthcare, agriculture and infrastructure; all of them are ranked high in priority for many African countries, and very tough as each itself is an aggregation of complex and inter-linked problems. What we wish to bring to such areas is comprehensive range of solutions which one single company alone cannot produce. At the Council member companies will bring unique expertise, technologies and know-how of their own and work together to achieve the end.
- Another working group is dedicated to accelerating business development by SMEs and startup companies, in order to swiftly increase the number of frontrunners in Africa business.
- In that way, through the launch of The Japan Business Council for Africa, we aim at a big model change to our past approach to Africa. Private and public sectors of Japan are united and jointly commit us in strengthening our relations with Africa in the field of business. What we would like to see is win-win partnership between Africa and Japan. In order to achieve the goal, we need to formulate multi-layered collaborations among the private and public sectors both in Africa and Japan, along with international community.
- As an essential part of such collaborations, I would highly appreciate the efforts by each national government in building foundation necessary to leverage the power of business for the economic development of your country; More specifically, we would like to see the progress of “reforms/transformation at home”, or, improvement of the environment for business. It is our hope that constructive propositions will come up from activities of Working Groups, and they help acceleration of African countries transformation at home.
- To the private sector delegates from African countries, I would like to stress the tremendous importance of cooperation with you; when we are to bring our business plans to the African soil for implementation, we need the in-depth knowledge in local needs, experience in the field, and capacity you have. We wish a wide-ranging collaboration toward the common goal will come up through mutual exchange hereafter.
- Lastly, I would like to call on the representatives from the international organizations to provide the new attempt I just portrayed with even greater cooperation and support, which I believe will help our joint efforts move forward more smoothly and swiftly.
- Thank you very much for your kind attention. Now, I would like to invite 4 speakers representing the Council’s working groups, so that you all could have a clearer picture of our attempts.