

(provisional translation)

TICAD 9 : Opening remarks by H.E. Mr. ISHIBA Shigeru, Prime Minister of
Japan

Your Excellency Mr. Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the African Union, Heads of State and Government and Ministers representing African countries, distinguished guests.

The Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) is being held in Japan for the first time in six years. On behalf of the host country, I am honored to welcome you all.

TICAD has been founded on the basic principles of African ownership and international partnership. Believing in Africa's future, Japan initiated this process in 1993. This was shortly after the end of the Cold War.

However, when we look back at the history between Japan and Africa, we can trace it as far back as the Tensho embassy to Europe in the 16th century. Four young men were dispatched to Rome as representatives of Japan's Christian daimyo or feudal lords. On their return journey, they are said to have stopped in Mozambique.

Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, who traveled to Ghana in 1927 and engaged in research on yellow fever, can also be considered a role model for Japanese who work on solutions to Africa's challenges.

My own engagement with Africa dates back to 2000, when I visited Senegal. At that time, I held the position of what would now be called the Vice-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. With the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 and renewed pressure to open Japan's agricultural markets, I was trying to somehow strengthen cooperation with

other countries and seeking partners to that end.

I then made a proposal to Senegal's Minister of Agriculture. "Let us work together as countries that both have low food self-sufficiency rates. Let us fight together on the WTO stage." However, Senegal's Minister of Agriculture flatly refused. While it was true that our two countries shared low food self-sufficiency rates, the reasons were completely different. Japan has financial resources. It can therefore purchase food from around the world. For Senegal, even if it wishes to introduce irrigation and other technologies, it lacks the funds to do so. It therefore simply has no choice but to buy food from the rest of the world.

Understanding your counterpart, being attentive to their needs, and creating solutions together. Locally-rooted solutions are important for Africa's development. This intense experience made me acutely aware of that. Indeed, that is precisely the theme of TICAD 9.

In co-creating solutions to challenges, TICAD 9 focuses on three important areas: private sector-led sustainable growth, youth and women, and regional integration and connectivity within and beyond Africa.

The first area is private sector-led sustainable growth. The public and private sectors will work together and strengthen private sector-led investment. Let us co-create solutions by leveraging Japanese companies' technologies and expertise in AI, DX, GX, and utilization of satellite data.

But speaking in these abstract terms probably won't get the message across. As an example, how about using digital technology to conduct detailed credit analyses and provide loan opportunities to taxi drivers who previously had difficulty accessing financial services? Hardworking drivers can use loans to purchase used cars and work toward their repayment. Through digital

technology, I want to work together to build a society where sincere efforts are rewarded.

Solving challenges is not a one-way street. I would like Africa to lend its strength for solving Japan's challenges as well. In Nagasaki Prefecture, there is a region called the Goto Islands, consisting of multiple remote islands, where drones are used to deliver pharmaceuticals. Well, where were the demonstration experiments for those drones conducted? That's right, in Rwanda. Thanks to the cooperation of the Rwandan people, we were able to solve one of Japan's challenges, which is the declining birthrate and depopulation.

In this way, new services and businesses through startups are gaining momentum in Africa. However, to unleash the potential of Africa's growing young population, one challenge is fostering industries and manufacturing that generate employment.

To improve the productivity of Africa's manufacturing sector, Japan began Kaizen training in Tunisia and has now expanded this to 41 African countries. The number of Kaizen trainers has reached 1,400 people, contributing to productivity improvements at 18,000 companies that generate employment for 280,000 people. Through this Kaizen approach, companies' productivity has reportedly improved by more than 60%.

In addition to these efforts, we will nurture and expand the industrial ecosystem between Japan and Africa. We will advance "Japan Africa Co-Creation for Industry," an initiative in which African startups and Japanese companies jointly develop industries.

In terms of finance, we will strengthen the functions of the "Enhanced Private Sector Assistance for Africa," a collaborative framework between Japan and

the African Development Bank, expanding it to a maximum of \$5.5 billion.

We will mobilize \$1.5 billion in public-private impact investment, using JICA's Private Sector Investment Finance as a catalyst. We will also make full use of trade insurance to reduce business risks.

Addressing debt issues is essential for sustainable growth. Japan will continue to play a leading role in improving the implementation of the Common Framework for debt treatment and enhancing debt transparency.

The second area is youth and women.

Let me return to my earlier anecdote about visiting Senegal. Since I was visiting Dakar, I decided to stop by the Mamelles Lighthouse at the westernmost point of the African continent. There, I encountered a group of female students. With the support of the local Japanese ambassador, we held an impromptu roundtable discussion. I gently asked the students about their future dreams. Their eyes lit up brightly and they spoke passionately about their future visions of becoming doctors and teachers. At that moment, I became convinced; such young people would create Africa's bright future. Now, that conviction is becoming reality.

Africa, with a median age of 19, is overflowing with youthful vitality. The key to making Africa the next growth center is to build the capacity of youth and women and secure employment for them.

Recognizing this, we will implement human resource development for 300,000 people over the next three years. For example, we will support the development of excellent AI talents like Ms. Pelonomi, who studied at Tohoku University and was selected as one of TIME magazine's 100 Most Influential People in AI. Through the "AI and Data Science Human Resource

Development and Africa Economic Growth Initiative,” we will develop 30,000 AI industry personnel in Africa over three years.

Japan will also attract investment in Africa’s health sector based on the “Investment Promotion Package for Sustainable Health in Africa.” The Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Knowledge Hub, which is to be established in Japan this year, and the development of 35,000 health and medical personnel will contribute to achieving UHC in African countries. We will support Africa’s vaccine supply through contributions of up to \$550 million over the next five years to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

In the education sector, which is the primary foundation of human resource development, we will improve learning for 10 million children and develop 150,000 advanced personnel.

The third area is regional integration and connectivity within and beyond Africa. For African countries’ further growth, besides enhanced industrial capacity, regional integration beyond national borders and strengthened connectivity are necessary.

To strengthen Africa’s regional integration, Japan will support the implementation and promotion of the African Continental Free Trade Area. We will establish a Public-Private-Academia Joint Study Group on Japan-Africa Economic Partnership.

Japan has historically imported much of its platinum from Africa, and we will expand cooperation through the “Resilient and Inclusive Supply-chain Enhancement (RISE) Partnership” and other initiatives to ensure a stable supply of Africa’s abundant resources, including copper and cobalt, which are used in hybrid and electric vehicles.

We will also launch a new region-wide Co-creation for common agenda initiative that promotes logistics in the Nacala Corridor, which contributes to strengthening mineral resource supply, while simultaneously advancing regional industrial development.

Strengthening open connectivity within and beyond Africa is also important. We will launch the “Economic Region Initiative of Indian Ocean – Africa” to invigorate trade and investment between Africa and the Indian Ocean region, contributing to Africa’s regional integration and industrial development.

Peace and stability, economic growth, and inclusive societies are interconnected. To realize a virtuous cycle of peace, growth, and stability in Africa, Japan will work together with Africa through contributions to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia, the “Africa Mine Action Platform,” and promotion of Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

Africa now participates as a responsible player in shaping the world order. Japan will work with Africa to build responsible global governance that further reflects the voices of African countries in the international community.

We will cooperate with African countries toward strengthening the rule of law and good governance, which are included in the goals of Agenda 2063.

Japan will advance efforts aimed at achieving the SDGs based on the concept of human security.

In this year marking the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations (UN), Japan will take joint action with African countries toward concrete progress in UN Security Council reform. Japan also intends to work with Africa to promote a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” based on the rule of law, which Japan advocated at TICAD VI.

Now, we are entering an era when solutions originating from Africa will save the international community, including Japan. Japan wishes to remain a reliable partner that walks together with Africa, providing solutions to one another. As proof of Japan's commitment to action, I would like to report that more than 300 cooperation documents have been concluded this time. Japan believes in Africa's future and will promote investment in Africa.

"I didn't come here to teach. I came here to learn."

These are the words of Dr. Noguchi Hideyo, who conducted research on yellow fever in Central and South America and Ghana, as I introduced earlier. Dr. Noguchi adhered to a "field-based approach," learning from Africa and working to solve problems on the ground in Ghana. This can be described as a co-creative effort to solve problems 100 years ago. In the 21st century, let us unite, Japan and the African leaders gathered here, and co-create innovative solutions to confront the challenges facing Africa and the world.

Thank you for your attention.