

Statement by Representative of Japan
Ambassador Hiroyasu Ando
At the World Summit on Food Security
Rome, Italy, 18 November 2009

Mr. Chair,
Director General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to address at this eminent event. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to extend my appreciation to the FAO Secretariat and all those involved in the preparation for the Summit.

(Challenges ahead)

In June last year, world leaders including then Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda gathered here in Rome for the High-Level Conference on Food Security, and made firm commitments to extend the hand of assistance to those suffering from historic rise in food prices. Since then, we have witnessed a dramatic rise in hunger population due to the repercussions of the price surge entwined with the impact of the global economic crisis. As we speak, one billion people are suffering from hunger and undernourishment. Their human security is at stake.

Today, although Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama is not here because of the tight schedule for the newly instituted administration, Japan together with the other world leaders here again reconfirm our commitments to global food security. We need to address mid to long-term challenges of boosting the world's agricultural output and reducing hunger, while taking decisive actions to help those still in crisis.

To this end, the five principles agreed upon at the G8 L'Aquila Summit and endorsed at this Food Security Summit indicate the way forward. Japan has committed to provide at least 3 billion dollars of agriculture-related assistance in the next three years. In implementing this assistance, we will support country-led processes, based on the ownership of partner countries. We are committed to multi-sectoral and participatory approach, seeking synergies among development sectors while drawing strength from a wide range of stakeholders.

In this regard, we are delighted to see the concept of Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security taking shape through a number of important meetings in Madrid, L'Aquila, Washington DC, Rome, and more importantly on the ground in developing countries. We commend the effort by the UN Secretary General's High Level Task Force to marshal the willingness for partnering for food security, and hope that the reformed Committee on World Food Security will be an effective vehicle to promote greater policy convergence and coordination.

(Responsible international investment in agriculture)

Based on the renewed principles and partnership, what Japan would like to achieve is,

among other things, the promotion of responsible international investment in agriculture. This is to address the opportunities and risks incurred in the growing trend of large-scale international investment and global land acquisitions.

Investment, whether foreign or domestic, private or government-backed, plays a key role in financing agricultural growth. Decades of underinvestment have meant continuing low productivity and stagnant production in many developing countries. On the other hand, poorly conceived or executed investments, particularly those involving large tracts of land, could have unintended negative impacts. The point is: we must promote international investment, but that must be done in an ethical manner. This is the idea of “responsible international investment in agriculture” which Japan is advocating. It should optimize the impact of increased investment, to maximize the benefits and to minimize the inherent risks. The overriding objective is to create a “win-win-win” situation for receiving countries, local communities and investors.

Based on this reflection, Japan, FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD and World Bank co-sponsored a roundtable concurrent with the UN General Assembly in September. After the discussion, the participants, i.e. senior officials from 31 countries and key stakeholders from international organizations, NGOs and private sector, agreed to work together to formulate principles to promote responsible investment in agriculture, and develop an international framework to translate the principles into tangible results.

Japan will continue to play a catalytic role in framing a coordinated global response to this issue and provide support to the international organizations, including through our FAO trust fund project to organize information for cultivating investment opportunities in developing countries. We will, at the same time, encourage our investors to materialize the concept of responsible investing.

(Conclusion)

Last but not least, I would like to stress the importance of the completion of the FAO reform. The Secretariat has to fully implement the Immediate Plan of Action and transform itself to a more relevant, functional and effective organization. No single institution can solve the problem of hunger and food insecurity, but FAO can play a more effective role in coordinating actions by various institutions with different expertise in the international community.

Now, it is time for action. Japan looks forward to working with all the partners gathering here today to continue our collective commitment to achieving food security and bettering the lives of the world’s poor and hungry.

Thank you for your attention.