

**Symposium on Maternal Health in Developing Countries**  
**Opening Statement**  
**By**  
**Councillor Kodama**

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for all the people who supported our hosting “Symposium on Maternal Health in Developing Countries” co-hosted with UNICEF today.

Development in developing countries has made progress in many ways in last 30 years supported by the efforts of the international community. For instance, infant/child mortality rate and illiteracy rate have halved in the last 30 years. However, developing countries still face many difficulties. The world population has increased rapidly from 3.7 billion to 6.1 billion in last 30 years. How we can realise sustainable development is important task for 21 century.

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the states of the United Nations affirmed their commitment to working together for sustainable development and thus Millennium Development Goals were commonly accepted by the world community as the most important development goals for providing basic conditions for our prosperous future. 4 goals out of 8 goals, namely, improvement of maternal health, reduction of infant/child mortality rate, combat with HIV/AIDS, empowerment of women, are to contribute to improvement of reproductive health. Improvement of reproductive health is crucial to achieve sustainable development. Progress of the 8 goals is monitored globally. Among them, reduction of maternal mortality rate is said to be the most challenging target to meet.

More than half million women annually and more than one thousand women daily die in pregnancy and childbirth. 99% of these deaths occur in developing countries. In most cases, they don't have to die if they were in developed countries. There is a fact that many women in pregnancy die in developing countries without any skilled attendance or any treatment.

Japan's ODA gives high priority to assistance in health sector. For instance, more than 20% of the grant aid or 20 billion-Yen (1.7 billion-Dollar) are allocated for health sector every year. Maternal-child health along with infectious disease control is two pillars of our assistance in health sector. Japan supports capacity building of doctors and midwives, building of health system and provision of hospitals and other health care facilities and provision of medicines in developing countries.

Based upon this understanding, we host this symposium today with UNICEF who plays active role in an effort to reduce the maternal mortality rate to review our assistance in the past and to study what can be done to achieve Millennium Development Goal of reducing the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015.

I hope any direction will come out of today's discussion among experts who have knowledge and experience in this area and it will lead the way to the improvement of our assistance for reducing maternal mortality rate.

Finally, I would like to conclude my words by hoping that more pregnant women, even a single more, who die in childbirth will be saved and our assistance will be useful to them as much as possible.