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TICAD V: ESTABLISHING AFRICA AS A CONTINENT OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR JAPAN AND THE WORLD

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The fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) brought historical success to Yokohama on June 1-3, 2013. The conference was co-chaired by Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the African Union. The heads of TICAD V co-organizers, Japan, African Union Commission (AUC), UN, UNDP and the World Bank were all present at the event.

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We also welcomed representatives of 51 African countries, including 39 heads of states and governments, and those of 72 international and regional organizations, as well as 31 development partner countries, Asian countries, private businesses and civil society organizations (http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page2e_000002.html).

Japan has hosted this summit-level conference for Africa, TICAD, every five years since 1993, and this year marks its 20th anniversary. During this long-term and consistent process, TICAD has maintained its unique character as an open and multilateral forum to discuss African challenges. The steady efforts made by Japan and the co-organizers have successfully raised awareness among the international community on African development issues. They have also provided important contributions to inform and enrich global development discussions on topics such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Poverty Reduction Strategies, and South-South Cooperation.

TICAD V highlighted Africa's potential for inclusive and sustainable growth, as well as opportunities for Japanese and global business communities. In his keynote speech, Prime Minister Abe announced the major Japanese initiatives to support African development over the next five years (2013-2017), amounting up to USD 32 billion in public-private initiatives. The pledge includes USD 14 billion for official development assistance (ODA), which JICA will play an essential role to implement (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000006375.pdf>). In the joint press conference, Prime Minister Abe remarked as follows: "Growth exists in Africa. Africa will be a growth center toward the mid-21st century. Now is the time to invest in a growing Africa." Thus, TICAD V was a landmark event spotlighting Africa as a promising continent for business and investment, in parallel with continuous development cooperation.


Yet Africa faces various development challenges, including education, health, food security, adaptations to climate change, good governance, and peace and security. While the poverty rate has started to decrease since the 2000s, 40% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa still lives under the poverty line of USD 1.25 per day. Access to electricity, safe drinking water, and public services like education and health has improved by the unstinting efforts of both

Africa itself and the international community. However, the levels are much lower than in other regions, and it will be difficult to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Furthermore, there remain other challenges, including low agricultural productivity, as well as peace and security threats in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa.

In this context, Africa needs more varieties of investment by the private sector to reduce poverty and to accelerate inclusive and sustainable growth. This sort of investment would bring in technology transfer, infrastructure and human resource development, and job creation. It would also contribute to transforming Africa from a resource dependent continent to a dynamic continent based upon a diversified economic structure with an increasingly skilled workforce as the engine of growth. The Japanese commitment package of USD 32 billion is not just to provide financial assistance to Africa, but also to support infrastructure and human resource development to facilitate greater private investment and more public-private partnerships.

Japan has been achieving its commitments made at past TICAD meetings. Its ODA to Africa doubled from USD 0.9 billion in 2008 to USD 1.8 billion in 2012 (On the annual net disbursement basis reported to OECD/DAC), and Japan's direct investment in Africa tripled from USD 1.7 billion to USD 5.2 billion, as pledged by then Prime Minister Fukuda in TICAD IV. To track and facilitate the implementation of the Yokohama Action Plan adopted at TICAD IV, Japan and the TICAD co-organizers have been organizing ministerial follow-up meetings and issuing TICAD Annual Progress Reports since 2009 (See the TICAD Annual Progress Report 2011, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad/ticadfollow-up/report/annual/2011/report2011.pdf>). This follow-up mechanism makes the TICAD process action- and result-oriented.

Japan will carry out what it pledged and promised at TICAD V. Prime Minister Abe expressed his intention to visit Africa at the earliest opportunity to promote a “win-win” partnership between Africa and Japan. The TICAD follow-up mechanism will continue to ensure the implementation of the Yokohama Action Plan 2013-2017. Achieving these commitments will strengthen the friendship

and diplomatic ties between the two partners and establish Africa as a continent of opportunities for Japan and the world. JICA will actively contribute to the concerted efforts by the Japanese public and private sectors to achieve these objectives (JICA Research Institute released several research reports on African development and the Post-TICAD V agenda, http://jica-ri.jica.go.jp/topic/jica-ri_released_the_research_findings_on_african_development_in_multifaceted_viewpoint.html). 

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