

Message from the Prime Minister of Japan
H. E. Mr. Taro Aso
on the occasion of
the Thirteenth Session of the Assembly of the African Union

1 July, 2009

Your Excellency, Mr. Muammar Al-Qadthafi, Leader of Al-Fateh Revolution of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and Chairperson of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union,

Your Excellency, Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Excellencies, Distinguished representatives from the Member States of the African Union,

Allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you on the occasion of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union.

One year has already passed since the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) and the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit. Today, the financial and economic crisis, which was not expected one year ago, has seriously affected African countries. Although many development partners, including Japan, have also been affected, Japan for its part is faithfully implementing the commitments it made at TICAD IV and the Hokkaido Toyako Summit in order to help Africa emerge from this crisis and realize growth and development once again.

For instance, this March, Japan hosted the TICAD Ministerial Follow-up Meeting in Botswana, which was attended by both former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, who served as chairman of TICAD IV, and our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone. Japan availed itself of the opportunity presented by the ministerial meeting to announce that it would be providing food and humanitarian assistance worth 300 million dollars to African countries. This assistance has already been delivered. Japan also took the opportunity to express its intention of implementing at the earliest possible opportunity grant and technical cooperation worth 2 billion dollars. In order to meet this commitment, Japan is now dispatching survey missions to Africa to identify and prepare possible projects. Furthermore, it solicited the views of the nations of Africa on the economic crisis and conveyed them to the London Summit this April.

In recent years, Africa has achieved unprecedented economic growth. We simply must not permit a situation to develop in which all of the efforts African nations made come to naught and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) become more

difficult to achieve. If we are to prevent this from happening, it is crucial that development partners, including Japan, fulfill the commitments they have made. It is also important that they implement without delay the assistance measures they agreed to take at the London Summit. To that end, when I attend the G8 L'Aquila Summit, which will be held shortly, I shall emphasize the enormous importance of international support for Africa.

The theme of this African Union summit is "Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security." Clearly, the world food crisis that occurred last year has had a serious impact on Africa and shed light on the uncertainty inherent in the situation with regard to the global supply and demand for food. With a view to increasing activity in the area of agricultural investment and substantially strengthening food productivity around the world, Japan will propose at the L'Aquila Summit an initiative to address the issue of the global agricultural land grab and to foster responsible international investment in agriculture.

As we made clear at TICAD IV, Japan, in cooperation with other development partners, has also been promoting the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) initiative, which aims to double rice production in Africa in ten years' time. At the beginning of last month, the second CARD meeting was held in Tokyo, with the attendance of H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan, Chairman of the Board of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (former Secretary General of the United Nations). I strongly hope that efforts such as these will be successful in increasing food supplies in Africa.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that this African Union Summit will achieve results that will better enable the nations of Africa to tackle the challenges the continent faces and achieve further development.

Taro Aso
Prime Minister of Japan