

Address by H.E. Mr. K. Minagawa, Ambassador of Japan to Uganda, on Opening the 4th General Meeting of CARD in Kampala on 8 November 2011

- Hon. Tress Buchanayandi, Minister of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries of Uganda,
- Dr. Namaga Ngongi, President, Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa, AGRA,
- Distinguished Co-Chairs of IFAD and NEPAD,
- Distinguished representatives of the CARD Steering Committee member organizations, AfricaRice, AfDB, AGRA, FAO, FARA, IFAD, IRRI, JICA, JIRCAS, NPCA and World Bank,
- Distinguished representatives of the CARD partners and observers,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to you all,

I am very much honored and delighted to be here today and address to you all, key stakeholders of rice development in Africa, on opening the 4th General Meeting of the Coalition for African Rice Development, CARD, in Kampala, Uganda, "the Pearl of Africa".

On behalf of the Government of Japan and on my own behalf, I wish to extend my heartiest congratulations to all of you on convening the General Meeting which is vital in further pursuing the goals of CARD initiative to double rice production in Africa within ten years, and wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Uganda for kindly hosting the Meeting and providing the nice venue.

It is very timely and opportune indeed, I believe, that the CARD General Meeting this time is to be held in Uganda as all of you may well be aware that Uganda, the "food basket" country in the region, is now emerging as a leading spearhead in promoting rice production in Africa with its dynamic agriculture development strategies and research programs formulated and carried out through its various research institutes including, in particular, the National Crops Resources Research Institute, NaCRRI, where rice research and training programs are vigorously being pursued and implemented in cooperation with JICA, Japan.

Now, I understand that in the past three years much has been done and achieved through strenuous efforts of dialogues and interactions among all the stakeholders since the CARD initiative was launched at TICAD IV in May 2008 with the aim of doubling rice production within ten years from 14 to 28 million tons in Sub-Sahara African countries. With all these achievements so far realized, you are here today to further enhance achieving the CARD goals by sharing and discussing the updates in key areas including National Rice Development Strategies, NRDS, formulation and implementation as well as the interventions and collaboration by the development partners, information on potential resources of the South-South cooperation countries, and public-private partnerships on rice value chain.

In light of the world population now reaching 7 billion and expected to further increase up to 9.3 billion by 2050 as has been recently announced by UNFPA, with African population to be

doubled from the current 1 billion to 2 billion, the CARD initiative is becoming more relevant and important to cope with the food security in the continent. In the case of Uganda, one of the most reproductive countries in the world with its annual population increase rate of 3.1%, for example, the population is expected to jump from the current 32 million to 100 million by 2050, the same as the current population of Japan. How to secure the food for such explosive population is a matter of great urgency therefore to be collectively resolved together. Hence, promoting rice production is of paramount importance as rice is becoming increasingly popular among the people in Africa as urbanization progresses for its merits of easy preserving and cooking while Africa is bestowed with a climate very much suited for rice growing and it has the undeveloped vast area of Rain-fed lowlands with a great potential for rice growing of high productivity.

It is against such backgrounds that Japan has been cooperating with the Government of Uganda since 2004 to promote rice production through various technical cooperation programs of JICA including dispatch of Japanese rice experts and establishing the rice research and training center within NaCRRI where they conduct researches on rice suited for different agro-ecological zones such as Irrigated, Rain-fed lowland and Rain-fed uplands. Many of young Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, JOCV, currently some of them in Uganda, are also engaged, in collaboration with JICA rice experts, in promoting rice production at various villages around the country where they stay and work together with the local people for two years term. Both JICA experts and volunteers are very dedicated to their work and highly appreciated by the local people.

In fact, for us, Japanese, rice is very important and special as the staple food, and we are told by our parents that we should not waste even one single grain of it as it is the precious fruit of farmers' sweat and hard labor in the field. Therefore it is sometimes even called, in cant or argot, *Shari*, Buddha's ashes, because it is so precious and to be cherished. And in the Shogunate time of samurai, the revenue of feudal samurai lord was measured by a rice volume unit, called *Koku*, 180 liters, produced in their fief and amount of salary for their samurai subjects was also shown by *Koku*. (The total revenue of Japan during the Tokugawa Shogunate period before Meiji Restoration in 1868 was 30 million *Koku*, with Tokugawa Shogun itself having 7 million *Koku*, the largest revenue holder.)

When I was small, sometime after the Second World War, rice was rather expensive and luxurious in Japan, hence our parents put barley cereals into rice to mix with it and economize as we were still very poor. So the cooked rice in my lunch box to eat at school was always very brown and not so tasty. My yearning as a small boy was therefore for a day to come when I will be able to enjoy pure tasty white rice. Even now, in some poor areas of Vietnam, the country of my wife, they put some potatoes in rice to economize. In Africa the same might be said now, as rice is still expensive though they like it much. It should be our dream therefore that a day will come when there is no hunger in Africa thanks much to the rice production realized through our joint efforts under the CARD Initiative and rice will be cherished by all in Africa.

After tomorrow, on Wednesday, you will be visiting the National Crops Resource Research

Centre, NaCRRC, to see how JICA is collaborating with the Government of Uganda to achieve the CARD goals. I myself have already been there in August this year and was very much impressed with all the activities being done there. I am confident that the center will surely become the hub for the research, training and promotion of rice growing not only in Uganda but also in the region and the whole Africa. We look forward to hearing your ideas, after the visit, on how to best utilize the facility for our joint endeavors towards achieving the CARD goals.

In concluding, I would like to congratulate you once again on convening the General Meeting in Uganda and wish the Meeting a great success for us to move forward to the next step for achieving the common goals together, looking forward to seeing you all at the next TICAD V meeting to be held in 2013 in Japan.

Thank you.