

Opening remarks by
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Co-Chair CARD Executive Committee
&
Executive Director
Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FARA
Arusha, Tanzania, 18th May 2010

Honourable Mr. Stephen Wassira Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives of the Government of Tanzania,

Mr. Isidore Leka Shirima, Regional Commissioner Arusha

Mrs. Monica Ngenzi Mbega (MP), Regional Commissioner Kilimanjaro

His Excellency Mr. Hiroshi Nakagawa, Ambassador of Japan to Tanzania,

Mr, Kenzo Oshima, Vice President of JICA,

Dr. Namanga Ngongi, President of AGRA,

Mr. Cheikh Sourang, Senior Programme Manager, IFAD

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to this 3rd CARD Annual General Meeting. This is a very important event in the continuing struggle to rid Africa of poverty and hunger because CARD is unique in having very clear time-bound targets and national strategies for meeting them. Because of these attributes, CARD is being watched as an example of what we Africans can deliver when we judiciously plan and determinedly implement our own development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me start by, on behalf of all delegates, thanking the government and people of Tanzania for the welcome and hospitality that they have given us. On behalf of the CARD Steering Committee I thank the government and people of Tanzania for their exemplary commitment to agricultural development and in particular rice development. I commend the approach to community-led development and extend my appreciation to all the agencies involved from Central to local government and the communities.

I understand that in the World Bank supported East African Agricultural Productivity Programme Tanzania has been selected to be the centre for excellence in rice and I think that is a very wise choice in view of the importance of rice in the Tanzania economy and the support being given to its development by the Government.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please also allow me to ask Mr. Kenso Oshima, Vice President of JICA to convey the deep appreciation of the African people and in particular the Continent's rice producers, traders, processors, and consumers, to the government and people of Japan for the generous support that they have provided through JICA to African rice development. I have been impressed by JICA's approach to supporting and facilitating National Rice Task Forces in ways that have enabled them to develop their National Rice Development Strategies with full national ownership. I also appreciate JICA's support for the NRDS as living documents that can be amended on the basis of accumulating experience and improved understanding of the complexities of rice value chains.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we will be hearing reports and commenting on the national rice development strategies (NRDS) of the first group of 12 CARD priority countries; namely Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. They will be expecting to benefit from feedback from us that will further improve the chances of the NRDS being successfully implemented. They are not seeking platitudes they want good advice and practical support. I ask our development partners, in particular, to listen with an ear to how they can get behind these NRDS so that the momentum created by their meticulous development will be sustained and justified by action on the farmers rice fields and in the stores, workshops, markets and shops of the other rice value chain actors.

Our development partners have urged us to adopt rational planning and to be consistent with the goals and modes of CAADP and I assure them that CARD is exemplary in these respects and as such is worthy of their support. It is time for other development partners to join JICA in supporting CARD implementation.

The most significant of all actors in all aspects of rice value chains is the private sector and I want to acknowledge, without reservation my appreciation for the investments made and the risks taken by private entrepreneurs and firms and I ask all delegates to bear this in mind so that the products and outcomes of this General Assembly will be conducive to further private sector investment in African rice development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have highlighted the role of different actors in African rice development. This reminds us that cooperation and partnerships are the essence of CARD and I urge all delegates to consider carefully how the institutions and agencies that they represent can not only be more effective in implementing CARD but also how they can best

add value to the contributions of other actors.

In this regard I wish to thank IFAD for its support for the national studies that have been conducted to assess the goodness of fit between the NRDS and national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and other strategic planning and financing documents. I would like to remind our Development Partners of their stated commitment to supporting agricultural development and urge them to guide us on issue in which the NRDS may not be compliant with the requirements of their support in the context of their commitments in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, and to the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). I also consider the contribution of this well structured programme for doubling the production of an essential under supplied staple food is making to achieving the Millennium development Goal I for halving extreme poverty and hunger, to which they are also committed.

As we consider how to advance the first group of NRDS into accelerated implementation, we should not forget the equally deserving second group of countries, i.e., Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, DR Congo, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Liberia, Rwanda, Togo and Zambia, that are keen to get on with developing their NRDS. They will be expecting to receive your wisdom as to what they should do to ensure that their NRDS will be successful in garnering the support that they need to make real impact on the livelihoods of resource-poor producers and low-income consumers.

During this general meeting we will be reflecting on the recommendations of the past two CARD General Meetings and assessing how far we have progressed. I have no doubt that we will be rightly impressed by the progress made so far. I am in a position to say that because I have been following CARD's progress from my position on the Chair of the Steering Committee and from FARA's contribution to the CARD Secretariat and I am sure that you will agree with me in congratulating the CARD Secretariat and particularly the NRDS national Task Forces.

In Tokyo we heard from Southern countries what they had to offer and now that implementation of the NRDS is getting underway we need to get to grips with that. We need to match their capacities with our national needs and we must develop efficient means of bringing partners together and enabling them to work effectively to strengthen Africa's human and institutional capacity for rice development.

However, there is no room for complacency. No human institution is very perfect. Indeed should it ever achieve perfection Chaos Theory indicates that it would be at the point of

extinction because the environment for which it perfected itself will have changed. And, there is no industry that is changing faster than African agriculture so CARD and the NRDS must always be changing to be more effective and make better use of the scarce resources made available to them.

In summary we will need to consider carefully the next steps for implementing the NRDS of the 1st group of countries, the next steps in advancing the NRDS of the 2nd group of countries, the next steps in engaging our development partners in active and significant support of the NRDS, the next step in advancing South-South cooperation and we must not forget to carefully consider the next steps in supporting the CARD Secretariat to meet the demands that we the rice development stakeholders are placing on it, .

Distinguished participants and Ladies and Gentlemen I wish you every success in deliberating the future of African rice development and I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can and sharing an enjoyable experience with you in the this most beautiful corners of Africa.