

**ADDRESS BY HON. STEPHEN MASATO WASIRA
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE FOOD SECURITY AND
COOPERATIVE AT THIRD CARD MEETING NGURDOTO
ARUSHA 18TH MAY, 2009**

**Senior Vice Present of JICA,
President of AGRA,
Ambassador of Japan to Tanzania,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen;**

Good morning;

I am honoured to be invited to officially open this very important 3rd CARD meeting. May I also take this opportunity to welcome you all to Tanzania and to the city of Arusha in particular. In deed, it is a great pleasure to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to host this very important third CARD Meeting for rice development in Africa. As you might be aware, Tanzania has also recently hosted International meeting on World Economic Forum of which agriculture was one of the agenda for discussion. On behalf of the Government, I feel obliged to extend my thanks to the organizers who proposed this 3rd CARD meeting be held in Tanzania. I want to assure you that the choice was very appropriate and it has come at the right time as we know that Tanzania National Rice Development Strategy will also contribute to the implementation of KILIMO KWANZA resolve (Agriculture First Resolve).

Chairperson; I have been informed that this meeting has brought participants from 23 Africa countries, four delegates from Asian countries and 15 Development Partners supporting CARD initiatives. It is my belief that this rich mix of expertise will provide required capacities to deliberate and come up with an agreed position as what needs to be done to revamp rice sector in Africa.

Chairperson; I am told that the theme of this meeting among others is to discuss progress made by respective countries on implementation of rice development strategies and come up with way forward. This kind of initiative should be applauded by African Governments as the strategy will facilitate achievement of MDGs and CAADP pillars. It is a known fact that, agriculture provides a livelihood for 80 percent of African. About 60 percent of economic active population works in agriculture; 70 percent of the poorest people on the continent work in agriculture. Therefore, to promote growth and reduce poverty in Africa, agriculture is critical.

Chairperson; Rice is a crop with dual role in many African Countries, development of the crop in a comprehensive and a coordinated manner could be the best plausible way that can give us a mileage of reducing poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

Chairperson; In the year 2008, the economic and financial crisis across the world had caused serious impact on food security and fuel crisis. Most of developing countries all over the world were very much affected. This made most of countries to revise their programmes on agricultural production so as to attain food security.

Chairperson; I am told that rice production in Africa is forecasted to expand by 7% to a record of 24.5 million tons driven mainly by Egypt, Madagascar, Mali and Nigeria. Nevertheless if you compare with Asian countries, reports indicate that in some countries rice yield has increased to more than five folds as compared to the past ten years. This has been achieved through development of a high yielding rice variety, which yield up to 14 tons per hectare. In Africa the yields are still less than 3 tons per hectare.

Chairperson; in Tanzania in particular, annual milled rice production between year 2000 and 2010 increased from 530,000 tons to 1,000,000 tons. With a population of approximately 40 million, annual growth rate of 2.8 percent and annual milled rice consumption per capital of 25 kg, the forecasted production to meet demand is expected to increase annually at around 100,000 tons of milled rice. Identified gaps to meet local demand are usually met through imports. For example, to meet the domestic requirements between year 2001 and 2005, the country imported up to hundred thousand tons of milled rice. Thus substantial amount of foreign exchange worth US\$ 130 million was spent for the import during the period though the small quantity of export worth US\$7.84 million was also recorded. Therefore, there is growing concern about the foreign currency drain resulting from rice import. To avoid the foreign exchange loss and the influence from the unstable global market, the Government of Tanzania is now seriously considering increasing rice self-sufficiency. The surplus produce is expected to be exported and earn foreign exchange.

Chairperson; to attain that objective of doubling rice from the current production of about one million tons to two million tons per annum by year 2018, Tanzania in its National Rice Development Strategy, has resolved to undertake the following (i) to provide smart targeted input support to small holder farmers (ii) to promote mechanized agriculture (iii) to strengthen research and extension delivery services (iv) to expand investment in infrastructure including irrigation, marketing, storage, transportation and value addition (v) to provide policy and regulatory incentives for attracting commercial farming in rice production and (vi) to strengthen collaboration and linkages between national, regional and international institutions.

Chairperson; I understand that other African countries have the same challenges on agriculture and rice sub-sector in particular. May I take this opportunity to mention some of the challenges facing crop sub-sector which are (i) low productivity (ii) over-dependence on rain-fed agriculture (iii) poor transportation causing high transportation cost and (iv) low levels of both public and private sector investment in agricultural production, processing and marketing infrastructure.

Chairperson; this meeting is part of the key milestones planned to lay a clearer strategy to support the initiative, which has been pioneered by Government of Japan through TICAD and later supported by AGRA through a joint programme.

Chairperson; commitments to work towards strengthening governance for food security, eliminating hunger and malnutrition and promoting rural development is not an option but a choice that every one must take. This means we need to do things differently and better. I am confident that the CARD meetings have shown the way on how we can do this differently for our own development.

Chairperson; with this few remarks, I have the pleasure to pronounce that the 3rd CARD meeting is officially opened and I wish you a good stay in Tanzania and further assure you that you are in a peaceful country. Enjoy your meeting.

I thank you for your kind attention.