

Remarks by JICA President Sadako Ogata
CARD Second General Meeting
Tokyo, June 3, 2009

**His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

First of all, on behalf of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, I wish to extend my warmest welcome to you all and thank you for traveling long distances to attend this Second General Meeting of the Coalition for African Rice Development here in Tokyo.

I am particularly pleased that Mr. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General and now Chairman of the Board of the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), is with us this morning to help open our meeting as co-host.

The many outstanding contributions he has made, and continues to make, to world peace, development and conflict resolution are well known. It is significant that he also dedicates his experiences, energy and influence to one of the most critical issues of today, namely food security and realization of a green revolution in Africa. As JICA President, I therefore feel honored to work with Mr. Annan on the challenging task before us, as you may know I had the privilege to work with him and under him for many years as UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Another remarkable feature of today's meeting is the presence of participants representing countries, institutions and the donor community from around the world. I specifically wish to note, with appreciation, the presence of representatives from 5 Asian countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam – as well as those from Egypt and Brazil. Most of them are first-timers to the CARD meeting, but they are all important rice producers in their own right, with their own unique experiences and technologies.

The involvement of the non-sub-Saharan countries in the CARD endeavor means that CARD is going to be a veritable global effort,

encompassing three continents – Africa, Asia, and Latin America – and, by the same token, a broad-based, unique example of South-South cooperation or triangular cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You will recall that CARD was launched during the TICAD IV Conference, held in Yokohama, towards the end of May 2008. Simply put, it has as its main objective the doubling of rice production in sub-Saharan Africa within the next ten years. This proposal was welcomed and supported by 40-plus African leaders and others represented at that conference.

Exactly one year has passed since that launch, and a lot of work has been accomplished to get the initiative off the ground. At the Nairobi meeting held last October, CARD members agreed on a set of organizational matters including the basic framework and core principles and the guidelines for a National Rice Development Strategy (NRDS).

Since Nairobi, further efforts have been made, of which the most important is the completion of the NRDS by the 12 African countries. I understand these NRDS documents will be the basis of discussion in the course of today and tomorrow. I am encouraged by this step-by-step approach and the momentum it has created, and I wish to congratulate all those actively involved in moving the CARD process forward.

At the same time, we are aware that what really matters is not only the implementation of concrete actions and specific measures, but reaching our objective of dramatically increasing rice production in sub-Sahara Africa. With that in mind, I believe, now one year after the initiative, we must start moving energetically. I hope that all the participants will get their acts together, to coordinate and harmonize their complementary action plans in the coming weeks and months.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we gather today, our societies are caught in the throes of the worst global recession in recent memory. People living in developed or developing countries have had to face other global threats such as the

climate change, food and energy shortage and the spread of pandemics.

In this situation, inevitably, the poor and most vulnerable people in developing countries are the ones that feel the crunch the hardest. Unfortunately they are mostly found in sub-Saharan Africa. This could mean a further setback in achieving the UN's MDG goals; it may result in increased economic, social and political instability, which in turn could further erode or undermine economic growth and sustainable development.

That is why it is important that, at the very least, the promises made at TICAD IV should be met and implemented by the donors in cooperation and partnership with African countries. As far as Japan is concerned, as was publicly stated recently at the TICAD follow-up ministerial meeting held in Botswana, it intends to faithfully keep the pledges made, including the doubling of its official development assistance to Africa within 5 years, despite the serious economic and financial difficulties that it is also currently suffering.

As Japan's aid implementation agency, JICA will do everything possible to strengthen its financial and technical cooperation activities in Africa, including the realization of the CARD initiative.

During the last 2 to 3 decades, JICA has already implemented about 100 rice projects in sub-Sahara Africa, including projects such as New Rice for Africa (NERICA) dissemination in Uganda and post-harvest technology improvement in Senegal. We will try to up-scale significantly the quality and quantity of investment for African rice development in the years to come, taking into account the NRDS of partner countries and in close collaboration with other actors, bilateral and multilateral.

Before concluding, I wish to mention that JICA has just concluded with AGRA the Memorandum of Understanding this morning. The act demonstrates JICA's commitment to CARD, its full support for Africa's green revolution, and its determination to maintain a strong working relationship between our two organizations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to express my best wishes for the success of this meeting and for a smooth and steady implementation of CARD as a truly international cooperation endeavor encompassing the three continents and the wider international community.

Thank you.