

Address by H.E. Mr. Yasuhide Nakayama,  
Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan  
on the Occasion of the Twelfth Session of  
the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII)  
Accra, Ghana on April 21, 2008

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished representatives of member States and international organizations,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Government of Ghana and the people of Ghana for their efforts in hosting UNCTAD XII.

I would also like to express my best respect to President John Kufuor, who is taking a leadership in promoting good governance and the rule of law, maintaining stable economic growth, and fostering peace and stability in Africa.

Mr. Chairman

The main theme of UNCTAD XII is “addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalization for development”.

The experiences of Japan and other Asian nations show that the promotion of trade has a very positive impact on economic growth. The WTO Doha Round is focusing on “trade as a means for development.” This is why the success of the round is critical for developing countries. Japan will continue to work with developing countries so that the Doha Round negotiations come to a positive and balanced agreement.

As part of “Aid for Trade,” Japan launched its “Development Initiative for Trade” in 2005. We provide a comprehensive package of assistance, designed to support developing countries, including financial and technical assistance for infrastructure improvements. Under this framework, Japan already expanded the coverage of its duty-free and quota-free treatment for LDC products in April 2007, ahead of timeframe set out at the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Conference.

Japan also provides assistance to the One Village, One Product Movement. One good example is a moisturizing soap produced here in Ghana, named “shea butter.” This “butter” made from the nuts of the shea tree is very popular in Japan. In rural villages, we provide assistance to improve production techniques, organize local residents, and give training to produce high-quality soaps. As a result, shea butter made in Ghana has come to be exported to Japan. We have great expectations that this will stimulate the local economies of Ghana and increase the incomes of the women producing this soap.

Mr. Chairman,

As globalization intensifies, UNCTAD is requested to respond appropriately to new challenges. That is why “Strengthening UNCTAD” is one of the themes of this conference.

As mentioned in the report released by the Panel of Eminent Persons in 2006, UNCTAD should eliminate duplication with other international organizations, while reinforcing inter-organizational partnerships. It is also important to focus on capacity building, investment analysis, and other areas in which UNCTAD holds a comparative advantage.

From the beginning of his term, Secretary- General Supachai is actively engaged in strengthening the functions of UNCTAD. And Japan is supporting his efforts. We hope that UNCTAD XII can produce concrete road maps to strengthen the function of the organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Next month, Japan will be hosting the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or TICAD IV. The theme is “Towards a Vibrant Africa.” The first TICAD was convened in 1993, after the end of the Cold War, when the international attention to Africa was fading. We are proud that TICAD brought the international interest back to Africa. Nevertheless, we must not forget that many people are still unable to enjoy the blessings that development brings. Conflicts still occur in many regions. The rise in food prices has a severe influence on the lives of poor people. In TICAD IV we intend to discuss how to respond to these issues.

In this regard, I would like to share with you a personal story about my grandfather. He was a politician for over 40 years, including the times before and after the Second World War, and traveled all around the world at a young age. He started his political career as a founder of a small political party called Great Nature. But because of the lack of understanding among the public of important global issues such as climate change, he unfortunately failed his first election. He firmly believed that it would be Africa that would determine the direction of the world.

As for me, early this year I visited Ethiopia, Niger and other African countries to learn what was going on in the region, such as the lack of safe and adequate drinking water and primary education for all. However, what I found the most important is securing peace and security as a basis of sustainable development. I have renewed my determination to carry on my grandfather’s belief and do my utmost to further the development of Africa.

This year Japan will be holding one more important meeting, namely the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July. The G8 Summit will also be taking up development and Africa as one of its main themes.

The discussions here will be taken into consideration in these meetings so that they will generate substantial impact.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing I would like to extend my sincere wishes that this meeting will be very productive for all of us. Thank you for your kind attention.