

(As Delivered)

The First General Meeting of Coalition for African Rice Development
Remarks by Mr. Kenzo Oshima, Senior Vice President, JICA
Nairobi, Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of JICA, and as a co-host, I'm very pleased to welcome all the colleagues and friends from Africa and around the world to the first General Meeting of CARD here in Nairobi. I recognize there are representatives who are taking part in CARD-related meetings for the first time - EU, GTZ, AFD, USAID, Egypt, CRS, Aga Khan Foundation - and they are most welcome.

I wish also to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to the AICAD secretariat for kindly providing the excellent venue and other necessary services for our meeting.

We are gathered here today to formally kick-off an international coalition mechanism focused on rice production increase in Africa. This was initially launched five months ago in the margins of TICAD IV Conference in Yokohama, Japan. This important multi-stakeholder initiative, CARD, aims at doubling African rice production within ten years, by 2018, and we will try to achieve this objective through an agreed mechanism and methodology. And we are here to deliberate and agree on them in the next few days.

As we meet today, many governments and people around the world have serious concern about the financial crisis and the prospect of a global recession. The situation is further compounded by another set of problems, which presumably is not independent from the financial turmoil, which is the volatility in the international commodity markets, particularly the high energy and food prices.

Although oil and agricultural commodity prices have recently fallen from their peaks, food prices are still hovering at a high level and are expected to continue to cause serious hardship to the poor in many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

In this connection, we recall the statements made with great urgency by African leaders and

representatives at the TICAD IV Conference, as well as in Rome, New York and elsewhere, emphasizing the all-importance of both short-term and long-term response in order to strengthen the safety nets to support the poor drastically improve agricultural productivity for food security and pro-poor growth.

We recall in particular that in the Chairman's summary of TICAD, it was noted, among others, that:

- Growth of the agricultural sector in Africa and rural reform measures were vital for economic growth and food security, and would contribute to poverty reduction, since more than two-thirds of African people live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their income and livelihood.
- To improve food security, it is necessary for countries, especially those with low agricultural productivity, to increase agricultural production and productivity.
- Participants welcomed Japanese initiatives such as the doubling of rice production in Africa, and noted that NERICA is a good example of research and development.

In a similar vein, two months later, at the Group of 8 industrialized countries' summit meeting held in Hokkaido, Japan, the G8 leaders issued a special statement on Global Food Security and stressed "the importance of reversing the overall decline of aid and investment in the agriculture sector, and committed to significantly increasing support for developing countries initiatives in this field, including working towards doubling production of key food staples in certain countries within 5-10 years."

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the CARD launch and the G8 summit meeting, there have been dialogues on this critical issue of African food security, agricultural reforms and rural development, and potential of rice production increase.

All these informal exchanges and interactions have been not only useful but they were instrumental in formulating ideas about the framework of cooperation for CARD implementation.

The latest effort was the CARD technical-level meeting held at WARDA headquarters in Benin at the end of September. The participants in that meeting prepared a set of draft documents such as the CARD Management/Operational Guideline and a format for National Rice

Development Strategy (NRDS). The experts also engaged themselves in an exchange of views on several key issues, including the concept of pilot countries/pilot sites.

On behalf of JICA, I wish to take the opportunity to express our thanks to WARDA for hosting the technical-level meeting and to all the experts who took part in it for the good work done by them.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On the basis of preparatory work done over the past few months, I believe we are now ready to start to move in a concrete manner. As we meet in this format today, I hope we will be able to agree on three key issues in order to jump-start the process:

- First is agreement on the documentation concerning Management and Operational Guideline and on a format of NRDS (National Rice Development Strategy);**
- Second is agreement on the selection of rice producing countries which we consider as the first group of candidates for the purpose of implementation of CARD-coordinated activities;**
- Third is agreement on some practical matters regarding the next steps, including the timeframe, method of work, the next meeting of CARD, etc.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a co-host of the TICAD process, Japan has steadily increased its own commitment to African development, both bilaterally and multilaterally through international organizations.

Japan's overall commitment to African development will be considerably stepped up when Japan's ODA to Africa will be doubled in the next 5 years, by 2012, as already publicly announced. Japan's support for African agriculture, in particular the rice sector, will be strengthened markedly within this overall framework.

JICA as Japan's aid implementing agency intends to build on the past and ongoing bilateral cooperation projects in the agriculture sector in a number of African countries, more specifically in the rice sector.

At the moment, we have 30 ongoing or planned rice-related cooperation projects in 17 African countries and this will be faithfully implemented. We will do so by considerably scaling up our efforts in grants, loans and technical cooperation as appropriate. We will also encourage the private sector investment in this area.

In terms of bilateral outlays, over the next five years JICA will invest in the Africa's agriculture sector to the tune of at least \$260 million in grant and technical cooperation, of which a significant part will go to CARD-supported projects and programs.

Additionally, regarding soft loans, Japan through JICA plans to invest in Africa's agriculture and infrastructure building a total of \$4 billion over the next 5 years. Out of this soft loan component, an as yet unspecified but sizable portion will be allocated to agriculture and CARD-related investments to scale-up the existing and future projects and programs.

Not only bilaterally, but Japan will also multilaterally increase its support for African agriculture including the rice production, particularly in collaboration with the World Bank.

At the recent Development Committee of the World Bank and the IMF held in Washington on October 12, the Japanese government announced a new special contribution of \$100 million over the next five years through a trust fund established by Japan at the Bank, for the comprehensive assistance for African agriculture.

Availing of this contribution, JAPAN and the World Bank will build on their respective competitive advantages and further solidify their coordination to ensure improvements in agricultural productivity for a successful implementation of CARD.

Specifically, resources available under this trust fund will be utilized for various activities and projects such as:

- community-based rural development, including establishing water users cooperatives, access of farmers to markets and fertilizers;**
- research and development, through the CGIAR, of seeds and rice varieties resistant to drought and diseases;**
- training of agricultural researchers, technicians, and extension workers;**
- Country-based rice assessment that will assist the implementation of pilot projects, etc.**

JICA intends to closely consult with the World Bank, the CGIAR and other partners and stakeholders in this regard soon.

I should also mention that JICA has seconded its staff, Mr. Hiraoka, to the CARD secretariat. And I wish to thank AGRA for its generosity to offer its premise for housing the CARD secretariat.

Before concluding, I would like to share with you good news of a recent marriage. It is the happy “marriage” between JICA and JBIC to become New JICA which this just took place on October 1st. As per the recent institutional reform in Japan, JICA incorporated the overseas economic cooperation arm of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, JBIC.

The main advantage of the restructuring is that for the first time a single aid agency under one management will be responsible for the implementation of Japan’s development assistance to developing countries. In other words, the three main tools of its development assistance – technical cooperation, grant aid and soft loan for medium to long term development – will be dispensed by the New JICA, which will now have a combined operational budget of some \$10 billion, a staff of some 1600, operating in about 150 countries, with its field presence in some 90 countries. You will no doubt see in future a much more proactive JICA in Africa, as well as in Asia.

In Africa, we all agree that development in the agriculture sector holds the key to Africa’s healthy growth and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. I believe that in our joint effort around the CARD initiative, we are united in one common ambition, which is to make a difference by making quality contribution towards the high objective of *a Green Revolution in Africa*. I believe, in short, CARD initiative is characterized in the following points;

- It is a focused-approach**
- It is a facilitation and coordination mechanism**
- It takes a practical, results-oriented approach**
- It is a long - lasting effort**
- The impact of CARD will not be limited only to rice but there will be beneficial flow-on effects, eventually, to agriculture as a whole and rural development.**

I should also emphasize the importance of the potential of the renewable energy for rural development as we promote CARD.

The new JICA looks forward to close collaboration with all its partners – bilateral aid agencies, regional and international organizations, as well as our partners in the developing countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There's an old song that was very popular among the UK soldiers fighting in WW1 on the European continent, which they would sing while they marched on the battle field, longing for home. It's a song called "Tipperary"- Tipperary being a small Irish town.

The original tune went something like this.

**"It's a long way to Tipperary,
It's a long way to go.
It's a long way to Tipperary,
To the sweetest girl I know.**

**Good-bye, Piccadilly,
Farewell, Leicester Square.**

**It's a long, long way to Tipperary,
But my heart's right there".**

Now, here is the CARD battle song on the same tune, improvised to suit the special occasion, as follows;

**"It's a long way to a Green Revolution,
It's a long way to go.
But don't you know that we'll get there,
With the help of CARD and NERICA!**

**Good-bye, famine and hunger,
Farewell, food importations.**

**It's a long, long way to a Green Revolution,
But our hearts are right there!"**

Thank you.