SPORTS FOR TOMORROW

-Mr. Miyamoto Visits Mostar-

In September 2013, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the detailed contents of “Sport for Tomorrow (SFT)”, a program of international contribution through sports by the Government of Japan.

The purpose of this program is to expand sporting value and promote Olympic and Paralympic movement to the people of all generations, especially the youth, for a better future of the world. The program targets more than 10 million people in over 100 countries, including developing countries in the upcoming years toward 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

SFT program consists of three main pillars, International Cooperation and Exchange through Sport, Establishment and Promotion of International Sports-related Human Resources and Continuing Support to International Anti-Doping Efforts.

JICA is directly contributing to the SFT program through Volunteer Programs and dispatching sports instructors, and through the Technical Cooperation in the field of sports.

In the spirit of SFT program, Former captain of Japan national football team and the President of NGO Mali Most (Little Bridge), Tsuneyasu Miyamoto visited the City of Mostar in the beginning of January 2017. His first official visit to this famous city in Bosnia and Herzegovina was in 2014, when the idea of establishing Sports Academy “Mali Most” was considered. Three years later, in January 2017, Miyamoto visited Sports Center “Kantarevac”, which has been reconstructed with the help of Japanese Government. Now it houses Sports Academy “Mali Most”, where 55 boys and girls, from different ethnic groups, practice free of charge. Miyamoto in collaboration with JICA aimed at establishing an Academy which will enhance ethnic reconciliation through sport and promote respect, fair play and teamwork among children of different ethnic groups, for the sake of better future for all.
Project of Capacity Building for Analysis and Reduction Measures of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Serbia

In this project, which started in March 2014, Hyogo Prefectural Institute of Environmental Sciences and University of Belgrade have jointly worked on the analysis and monitoring of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in Pancevo city.

In February 2017, the final seminar was held in Pancevo city hall, and more than 50 persons attended the seminar. Participants looked back on activities of the project over the past three years. They also actively exchanged their opinions about the further cooperation in the future.

Data collection survey on refugee support in Balkan region

Since 2015, a large number of migrants and refugees from the Middle East countries who are heading for the EU countries have passed through the Balkan region and thousands of them are obliged to stay for a long time in Serbia and Macedonia.

JICA has started the data collection survey on refugee support in this region. According to the survey, supporting needs of health care sector and waste management sector at local governments were confirmed.

Considering this situation, in March 2017, JICA provided X-ray machine and medical equipment to Presevo and Vranje in Serbia.

Country Focused Training on Community Development in Japan Completed

From the latter half of January to mid-February, the group of 12 (8 Albanians and 4 Serbians) visited Hiroshima, Tokushima and Fukushima in order to learn Japanese experiences on rural economic promotion, peace building and reconstruction. The training aims to support own initiatives of training participants on rural revitalization and trust building among different ethnic groups by mobilizing Kosovo communities, based on what they learned from Japanese experiences. For instance, they learned reconstruction works and peace effort after the war and marketing for local products in Hiroshima, rural industry development using a local fruit and tree leaves as well as waste separation effort in Tokushima, and NPOs' rural revitalization works after Tsunami disaster in Iwaki, Fukushima. On the last day of training, members presented their own plans such as support to local agricultural production, creation of unique products, branding, and organizing fairs following examples of roadside stations and Tokushima Marche, etc.

The members have established their own community throughout the stay in Japan and are communicating to each other since after the return from Japan; and it is likely that members are to come up with new collaboration between different municipalities and private-public initiatives in the coming future.
On 21 February 2017, the Final Presentation Seminar of the “Project for Confidence-building through Rural Development” was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Around 90 participants from diplomatic missions, donor agencies, NGOs, relating ministries, etc. as well as mayors from Bratunac, Rogatica, and Srebrenica, and the assistant minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management, Republic Srpska (located in Banja Luka) attended the seminar. From Japanese side, H.E. Ambassador of Japan to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office presented at the seminar.

The Project commenced in January 2014 and it is scheduled to be finalized by the end of March 2017 as planned. JICA firstly dispatched a long-term expert to Srebrenica in March, a city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and subsequently carried out the Project for Confidence-Building in Srebrenica on Agricultural and Rural Enterprise Development from September 2008 to November 2013. Building on the outcomes of those earlier projects, this project aims at further resident reconciliation through the inclusive strengthening of a fair regional development system, including Bratunac and Rogatica, neighbors to Srebrenica.

At the opening address, the assistant minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management mentioned that the Project has been recognized as a successful one and integration and reconciliation are essential for agricultural development, expressed appreciation to the assistance from the Government of Japan. The mayors of Bratunac, Rogatica, and Srebrenica expressed their gratitude for JICA cooperation.

H.E. Ambassador of Japan to Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted that utilizing their experience through knowledge-sharing program in Japan by three mayors, and realizing activities indicated the action plans are expected. The Chief Representative of the JICA Balkan Office noted that JICA had locally disbursed funds amounting to approximately 4 million convertible marks (approx. 250 million Japanese Yen) for the Project activities.

The Chief Advisor of the Project provided a presentation of the Project framework including raspberry production, honey production, sheep production, small scale irrigation, recovering grass land, and D-HOPE (decentralized Hands-On Program Approach) activities. Each municipality then gave a presentation on activities and outputs of the Project. Bratunac municipality stressed its promoting raspberry production which includes establishing a nursery of raspberry seedlings, rehabilitation of small scale infrastructure, and honey production. According to the Rogatica presentation, work has been proceeding in introducing beekeeping, sheep production, orchard fruit production and superior dairy cows, as well as in introducing communal use agricultural equipment. Srebrenica municipality reported that it’s promoted agricultural products such as raspberries, honey, sheep and cows, restoration of small-scale infrastructure. The three municipalities then presented action plan using D-HOPE for 2017.

As the Project will be finalized in March 2017, continuing the activities and utilizing the outcomes of the Project with initiative and leadership of each municipality are expected.
Ceremony on new “Project for Geospatial Information and Sustainable Land Development” Hosted by Albanian Prime Minister

A signing ceremony to launch the project “Geospatial Information and Sustainable Land Development in Tirana-Durres Area” was held on the 22th February in Albania.

The Prime Minister of Albania, Mr. Rama, has offered to hold the ceremony at his office, in so called “Room of Maps”, which beautifully colored red walls are decorated with large ancient maps of Albania. The room is believed to be designed by Mr. Rama himself. The ceremony started with Mr. Rama’s speech in which he explained the importance of this project to Albania, and expressed his gratitude towards the quantity and quality of Japanese ODA. Ms. Milena Harito Minister of Innovation and Public Administration together with the counterpart organization Authority of Geospatial Information has expressed her gratitude and eagerness to start working on this project in cooperation with JICA. The project aims to enhance social and economic development activities and contribute to acceleration of infrastructure development in Tirana-Durres area by utilizing large scale digital topographic maps, and will include activities such as production of map and on the job training in Albania and Japan by Japanese experts to transfer the technology of the map production.

Terminal Evaluation of “Waste minimization and 3R Promotion Project” Finalized

Being launched in June 2014, the project has been supporting capacity building for government towards waste management, waste minimization, and 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) promotion in Albania. Three pilot projects have been completed in Cerrik, Vau i Dejes, and Tirana municipalities, through which door-to-door collection, methods of recyclable waste collection, and agricultural waste collection were introduced and implemented. In Tirana, schools have been conducting recycling activities that were led by students in cooperation with their families and some local business owners. Terminal evaluation of the project was conducted in January, which concluded that the project would most likely to achieve the Project Purpose by the end of the project implementation period. On March 9th and 10th, a seminar was held during which 3R Guideline and completed 3R Action Plans from some municipalities were presented, as well as a filed visit to pilot project site in Cerrik municipality was conducted. It was a successful last seminar for the project with participation of about 60 municipality employees from 50 municipalities from all around Albania.
JICA had implemented the Project on Development of Integrated System for Prevention and Early Warning of Forest Fires, in collaboration with Crisis Management Center of Macedonia for three years from 2011 to 2014. CMC and JICA considered that the outcomes of the previous project should not be limited in Macedonia, but supposed to be disseminated into the surrounding countries because forest fire does not have borders and it is a common issue in the Balkan region, and have been implementing the training program on Integrated System for Prevention and Early Warning for Forest Fires inviting five countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia).

The second Technical Seminar was held from 6 to 8 March 2017 in Skopje with 25 participants from five countries. In the seminar, in addition to reviewing the contents of the first seminar, action plans of each country were presented and suggestions were provided by the consultant. It should be noted that the seminar provided opportunity for participants to actively exchange their views.

CMC, host of the training program, will have follow-up activities to support each country for realizing their action plans as a next step.

Due to prolonged conflict in the Middle East, number of refugees and migrants heading to Europe has been drastically increased since 2015. Because many of them passed through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia to enter the EU countries, the route has been called the Balkan Route. Municipalities which are on the Balkan Route have faced difficulties that demand of public services such as health/hygiene and waste disposal has exceeded their capacity of providing public services. In response to the situation, JICA has implemented a survey on conditions of public services of the municipalities in Macedonia and Serbia which have been affected by influx and stay of refugees and migrants to compile cooperation plans in middle and long term as well as to implement pilot projects providing quick impacts.

Kumanovo which is located in Northern part of Macedonia and close to a border with Serbia has had a burden to provide public services. JICA decided to implement a pilot project which provides an ambulance and an anaesthesia machine to Kumanovo Hospital to keep its functions. In March 2017, an ambulance and an anaesthesia machine were delivered to the Hospital.
Dear all,

At the end of this four year and three month assignment with fulfilling, rewarding and sometimes challenging memories I will be returning to Japan.

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation for your support. During this period JICA Balkan office has sought to strengthen its financial and technical cooperation projects for environmental conservation, private sector development, disaster risk management and peace and reconciliation. In year 2016 we celebrated 10th anniversary since the office opened in 2006. For the first, JICA extended emergency assistance to the floods that hit the region, and launched assessment for assistance to address the refugee and migrant crisis. The office continues to cooperate with the partners, develop and diversify its program.

In this period many development projects initiated by both governments and private sector have taken place in this entire region. On-going infrastructure development to modernize cities as well as construction of new buildings and highways will dramatically change the landscape of the region, make people’s life convenient, and attract more foreign investment. Recently in Japan there is growing media coverage of Balkans which may arouse Japanese tourist and investor’s interest towards here. Stronger relations between the Balkans and Japan are expected to be tied for future. That is what I hope at the end of assignment and am looking forward to returning here in the future.

I have been strongly impressed and fascinated by the Balkans and believe in its potential for future. I wish you all the best in your future endeavor.

Yours sincerely,

Toshiya ABE