Japanese Private Sector for African Development

On August 26, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) held a seminar titled “Japanese Private Sector for African Development” that was co-organized with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Junior Chamber International (JCI) and held at the Sarova Panafric Hotel in Nairobi for the purpose of seeking innovative and inclusive business models in Africa.

The event included a presentation on an analysis of the economic outlook for Africa, panel discussions about how inclusive business models can be built and rolled out with cross-border partners, and proposals by the both Japanese and African private sector for African economic development.

At the start of the event, Mr. Ayodele Odusola, Chief Economist and Head of the Strategic Advisory Unit of the Regional Bureau for Africa, gave a keynote speech on the “2016 African regional economic outlook.” In the past two years, economic growth has slowed to a more moderate pace due to the impact of declining prices in the world economy. This trend is expected to continue in 2016, however, stronger economic growth is expected in 2017, due to an expected expansion in domestic demand.”

Next, Mr. Hiro Nishiguchi, Executive Managing Director of Japan Innovation Network, facilitated the panel discussions with four Japanese companies that work with JICA: Nitto Construction Inc., Tottori Resource Recycling, Inc., CFP Corp., and Digital Grid Inc. All small and medium-sized enterprises originated in Japan, the companies discussed solutions in which advanced Japanese technologies are applied to social development in Africa.

In the second part of the event, Ms. Minja Nieminen, Outreach Lead of the UNDP business development program of “Business Call to Action” in Kenya, joined four other companies in another panel discussion on “cross-border partnerships and inclusive project development.” Three of the companies are based in Japan—LIXIL Corp., Ajinomoto Co., Inc., Saraya Co., Ltd.—and one in Kenya, AfricAqua, Ltd. The all panelists stressed the importance of localization of their goods and services, and the
human resource development. The business experiences in Africa that the Japanese companies shared provided a good opportunity for participants to learn about the challenges that Japanese companies face when entering the African market.

At the end of the talk session, Mr. Paschal Obinna Dike, World President of JCI, spoke about the expectation of future cooperation between Africa and Japan in the private sector. Then, Mr. Mamoru Sekiyama, Chairman of the Africa-Japan Relations Committee of the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, concluded the session by making suggestions on further deepening the policy dialogue between Japan and Africa.

Participants

- Ayodele Odusola, Chief Economist and Head of the Strategic Advisory Unit, Regional Bureau for Africa, UNDP
- Mamoru Sekiyama, Chairman, Africa-Japan Relations Committee, Japan Association of Corporate Executives

Mr. Yusuke Saraya, President, Saraya Co. Ltd.