Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Africa

On August 26, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) held a seminar on universal health coverage (UHC) in Africa at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in conjunction with the Government of Kenya, the Government of Japan, the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the African Union Committee, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It was held with the attendance of Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. William Ruto, Vice President of Kenya, Mr. Macky Sall, President of Senegal, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of World Bank Group, Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO, Dr. Mark Dybul, Executive Director of Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, Mr. Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, other Ministers of African countries and VIPs. They expressed high-level commitment to achieving UHC in Africa.

UHC means that all people receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship throughout their lives, and achieving UHC is one of the health targets listed in the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite immense economic growth in Africa, there are still approximately 11 million people every year who suffer from catastrophic medical expenditures. Another serious concern that has recently emerged in Africa is domestic health disparities. Moreover, the pandemic outbreak of Ebola virus disease in 2014 has reminded the world of the importance of preparedness and of a timely response when a health crisis arises. This side event was organized to accelerate the efforts towards UHC while addressing these challenges.

There were more than 250 people in attendance at the event, including participants from African countries and international organizations, and Japanese stakeholders and others from general civil society. At the commencement of the event, Mr. William Ruto, Vice President of Kenya, delivered the keynote speech, making a call for strong leadership to extend health insurance to the poor under devolution, noting the support Japan has provided for UHC, and announcing the commitment to donate 5 million dollars to Global Fund. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, then described how the G7 Ise-Shima Summit was the first G7 meeting to focus on UHC, and stressed the
importance of investing in resilient health systems and in prevention and preparedness measures for pandemics during normal times to better address outbreaks such as the Ebola pandemic that struck Africa. Mr. Abe also mentioned that Japan has provided cooperation for infectious disease control and to research institutes in Kenya, Ghana and other countries for four decades, and urged continuing cooperation to better respond to pandemics. Following these two keynote speeches, Mr. Macky Sall, President of Senegal and Mr. Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs on behalf of Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia also discussed the necessity of the national expansion of health services and human resource development, the importance of inclusiveness and domestic resource mobilization, respectively, indications of their strong leadership and commitment for accelerating the effort toward UHC.

After these four keynote speeches, Mr. Shinichi Kitaoka, President of JICA, moderated the comments portion of the event. Agency representatives who made comments were prominent global health leaders, including Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of World Bank Group, Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO, Dr. Mark Dybul, Executive Director of Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and Mr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank.

Afterwards, Mr. Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, described Japan’s support to UHC in Africa, and his address was followed by a presentation by Dr. Olusoji Adeyi, Director of Global Practice, Health, Nutrition and Population of the World Bank, on “UHC in Africa: A Framework for Action” which is a new framework drafted jointly by JICA and other co-organizers of this event. A high-level roundtable was then moderated by Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Africa. Ministers of Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia and Côte d’Ivoire and the CEO of Amref Africa discussed the progress and challenges in domestic resource mobilization, expanding service coverage, the engagement of civil society and other related issues.

JICA will continue to work with African countries and other partners comprehensively toward the achievement of UHC by further strengthening financial risk protection, service delivery and preparedness for health emergencies based on the Framework for Action.
Speakers

Part 1
Keynote Speeches by Heads of State
- Abe, Shinzo, Prime Minister, Japan
- Tedros, Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia
- Ruto, William, Vice President, Kenya
- Sall, Macky, President, Senegal

Comments from Heads of Agencies
- Adesina, Akinwum, President, African Development Bank
- Chan, Margaret, Director-General, World Health Organization
- Dybul, Mark, Executive Director, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- Kim, Jim Yong, President, World Bank Group

Part 2
Japan’s commitment to UHC in Africa
- Shiozaki, Yasuhisa, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

UHC in Africa - A Framework for action
- Adeyi, Olusoji, Director, Global Practice, Health, Nutrition and Population, World Bank

High level round table
- Coffie, Raymonde Goudou, Minister of Health, Côte d’Ivoire
- Gitahi, Githinji, CEO, Amref Health Africa
- Gebreyesus, Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia
- Moeti, Matshidiso, Regional Director, Regional Office for Africa, WHO
- Muraguri, Nicolas, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Kenya
- Segbefia, Alexander, Minister of Health, Ghana

Part 1 – Moderators
- Kitaoka, Shinichi, President, JICA
- Mailu, Cleopa, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health, Kenya

Part 2 – Moderator
Moeti, Matshidiso, Regional Director, Regional Office for Africa, WHO

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gives a speech at TICAD VI

JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka