

【Side event of TICAD7】

**Bridging Africa and Japan through ABE Initiative**  
**~Promoting Japanese companies' business in Africa~**

On Aug. 28, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) hosted a side event to discuss expanding a network of trust between Japan and Africa, at the InterContinental Yokohama Grand. There were over 140 participants from private companies, universities, and embassies of African nations in Tokyo. Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and Member of House of Representatives, Mr. Kenji Yamada, also visited the event.

In the opening remarks, JICA Senior Vice President Hiroshi Kato expressed his expectations for “African Business Education (ABE) Initiative 3.0,” which was announced at the opening speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in a plenary session of TICAD just before this event. Following the guest of honor speech from Deputy President of the Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship Association and Member of House of Representatives, Mr. Asahiko Mihara, five representatives of the current and ex-ABE Initiative participants, selected from more than 100 applicants, made presentations on their activities. In their presentations, stories on a wide range of fields were shared, such as, nurturing young entrepreneurs at university after returning to one’s home country, opening an East-Africa platform to build a network between East-Africa and Japan, and being employed at a Japanese construction equipment design company making use of earthquake engineering knowledge learned at a Japanese university.

Next, Professor Seiichiro Yonekura, corporate representatives, Ms. Kaori Fujita and Mr. Yusuke Ueno, Mr. Nico De Wet from Kakehashi Africa, and two ex-ABE Initiative participants gathered to discuss the utilization of the ABE initiative from a businesses’ perspective and the importance of maintaining the network after returning to their home countries from the participants’ perspective. There was a lively discussion with all the participants on how the human network born from the ABE Initiative could be developed to promote Japanese companies’ advancement into Africa and industrial development in the region. One cooperate representative emphasized that even if Africa and Japan have cultural and linguistic differences, it is important to just step forward and accept ABE

participants as interns. Accepting ABE participants leads to preparing internal procedures and laws for developing business in Africa.

Opinions were exchanged and experiences shared about making business development meaningful to African countries, Japanese businesses, and ABE Initiative participants, bringing a sense of unity to the event.

#### ■ Participants

[Opening Remarks]

Hiroshi Kato, Senior Vice President, JICA

[Greetings from Guest of Honor]

Asahiko Mihara, Member of House of Representatives, Deputy President, Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship Association

[Presenters]

Yawovi Agbewonou Helton, Togo

Arafat Ahmed, Egypt

Hassan Mohamed Muse, Somalia

Kipkemboi Benson, Kenya

Ajok Robinah, Uganda

[Panelists]

Seiichiro Yonekura, Professor, Graduate School of Innovation Management, Hosei University (Moderator)

Kaori Fujita, Director, Hinode Sangyo Co.Ltd

Yusuke Ueno, Manager, Marketing Section, International Sales and Marketing Department, TOA Corporation

Nico De Wet, CEO, Kakehashi Africa

Ahmed Arafat

Ajok Robinah

#### ■ Note

1. ABE Initiative is a program that offers opportunities for young African men and women to take master's courses in Japanese universities and to experience

internships at Japanese enterprises. It aims to develop human resources in African industries as well as a “pilot” to guide Japanese businesses entering the African market.

<https://www.jica.go.jp/africahiroba/business/detail/03/index.html>

2. Kakehashi Africa is an international NGO established by ABE Initiative trainees that serves as a platform for networking between the ABE Initiative and the Japanese companies.

<https://www.kakehashiafrica.com/>

#### ■ Photos





■ Related SDGs

