President Kitaoka visits Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of Rwanda

On August 5, JICA signed a grant agreement with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Islamabad to provide grant aid up to 560 million yen for the Project for Agri-food and Agro-industry Development Assistance in Pakistan. This is the first time JICA has attempted a collaboration with UNIDO via a grant agreement. This 48-month project aims to improve the livelihood of farmers and workers in the agricultural industry in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Balochistan provincial areas by spreading technology for the cultivation and processing of agricultural products. The agreement provides for the introduction of the equipment and capital needed to process, package and store these products, and also covers technical support that will be focused on developing sales channels.

The agricultural sector in Pakistan is a key industry, producing around 20% of GDP and supporting 43% of the employed population. Consequently, the Pakistan government has made agriculture a priority issue, identifying it as key to increasing employment, reducing poverty, and promoting economic development for the nation. The target location for this project is the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Balochistan provincial areas, where 60% of the population is involved in agriculture or agriculture-related work. However, these two provinces have traditionally used self-sufficient methods for the cultivation of crops, and with large variations in rainfall, cropping is notoriously unstable. Although strategies such as multi-cropping and mixed agriculture are widespread, many farmers and related industrial workers in these areas continue to face economic challenges. The prospects for effective cooperation are strong, as UNIDO has rich experience building agricultural value chains in Pakistan, and can activate community networks in order to address the relevant issues.

Dr. Kitaoka met with Japanese entrepreneurs operating their business in Rwanda, enjoying an exchange of ideas, and sharing high expectations for the country with all parties.