Closing Remarks

at the Reporting Session for JICA's Former Technical Training Participants
in the field of Education, Science and Mathematics

by Mr. Fumihiko Suzuki, Program Manager, the JICA Rwanda Office

Executive Secretary of the Teacher Service Committee (TCS)
Director General of Science, Technology and Research, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC),
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today at the training reporting session of five groups who represent their colleagues and fellows of JICA's former technical training participants in the field of education in Japan and other countries in 2009. On behalf of JICA, I would like to say a few words as my closing remarks.

Ladies and gentlemen,

JICA has restarted supporting Rwanda in 2003. Since then, we have been focusing two major areas - Human Resources Development and Rural Development - in the context of national policy in Rwanda, EDPRS in particular.

Please let me explain why the Japanese government decided to support particularly Human Resources Development, namely, education sector. It is because we strongly believe that education is one of the most effective medicines to eradicate poverty with.

Please look at Japan. We do not have natural resources. However, we could succeed in achieving economic development to some extent, after an awful damage by the World War II (WWII). The reason of this success was due to improved education. The Japanese government significantly invested itself into education after the WWII. For example, we restructured education system, increased the number of schools and teachers, and conducted teacher training to improve the quality of teaching and learning for all children in Japan. The Japanese government believed that an increase in the number of capable individuals could bring prosperity to the country, despite the fact that Japan does not have natural resources. The effectiveness of this strategy has already been well recognized by many researches. Most of the people in Japan are aware of the importance of investment in human capital which can bring economic development to their own country.

Another reason is that education is one of the universal human rights. It is a strong tool to combat ignorance and illiteracy which often lead to vulnerability and poverty. In order to empower people and ensure their well being, education is crucial for everybody on the earth.

The Rwandan government has been aware of the importance of education and its effectiveness for national growth. Therefore, since 1994, the Rwandan government has been working with their development partners to restructure their education system. Throughout their efforts, they have made significant economic growth and progress for the people's well being. Rwanda continues to steadily grow, achieving socio-economic development.

Now, as His Excellency President has committed, Rwanda aims at becoming a technology
based country. Math and science are the base of technology; therefore, education in the field of mathematics and science is crucial. To achieve this aim, Rwanda has a high demand for qualified teachers. JICA has experience in building capacity of math and science teachers in African countries, such as Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia and some Western African Countries.

With this background, the Rwandan government and the Japanese government agreed to commence the project “Strengthening Mathematic and science for Secondary Education (SMASSE) Rwanda” in 2007, which is now growing as one of the key components for JICA’s support in the field of Human Resource Development in Rwanda.

The education training which 21 teachers and staff here attended has been established for the purpose of supporting human resource development in Africa. As you understood from today’s presentation, all contents of the five training courses are key to strengthening capacity of math and science education in Rwanda.

I am very happy to know that every single training participant has learnt a lot from our training courses. What makes me even more pleased and I think is very important, is the fact that lessons learnt and good practice from the training were widely shared with many stakeholders here today, and our discussion for a way forward was very comprehensive, resulting in a concrete follow up plan.

JICA is offering various training opportunities. In Rwanda, every year, we send about 80 Rwandese people to our training in Japan and other countries. The first and the most important step to take in the post training is to share new skills and knowledge as we have done here today. We can do more things by sharing our experience with as many stakeholders as possible. In this opportunity, I wish to express my deep appreciation to attendees, presenters, facilitators, and in particular, Mr. Antoine, who initiated this knowledge sharing and prepared the training reporting session.

Let me repeat this again: today, we have done the “Knowledge Sharing (KS)”, which is the first and very important step for a way forward. On behalf of JICA, I wish all of you take an initiative to improve the quality of math and science education for the brilliant future of Rwanda and for all children in this country.

At the Tokyo International Conference for Africa Development (TICAD) IV in 2008, the Japanese government committed itself to doubling ODA to Africa by 2012, targeting education as one of its key development areas, specifically training 100,000 teachers in the field of Math and Science. Together with the JICA’s Technical Cooperation project “SMASSE Rwanda”, the JICA Rwanda office continues working with the Government of Rwanda for the brighter future of Rwanda.

Thank you very much. Arigatou gozaimasu. Murakoze Chane.