

Speech by Ambassador Kaoru ISHIKAWA,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan
to the Arab Republic of Egypt,
on the Occasion of the Opening Ceremony of 1st course of the
Quality Management of Concurrent Infection Control of TB/HIV for
Africa (Nile Basin Countries)

Mercure Hotel Ismailia, Thursday 29th May 2008

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honour and pleasure for me to attend this opening ceremony of the 1st course of the Quality Management of the Concurrent Infection Control of Tuberculosis and HIV for African Countries.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to all the people who contributed to start this course especially this year. This is the year when Japan together with her African partners organizes "The Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development", or TICAD IV and you may be reading articles on TICAD IV which is held this week in Yokohama city. TICAD process started in 1993 to bring back Africa to the world attention. In fact, Europeans were advancing a theory of "aid fatigue" to justify their withdrawal of ODA from Africa and use that money to East Europe. TICAD changed that tide and brought back again the priority Africa. TICAD has been based on "Afro-optimism" and confidence in ordinary African people. And I would like to emphasize that the Japanese initiative concerning TICAD does not have any hidden agenda because TICAD is prepared, realized and pursued in total transparent partnership with African people.

You are here to enhance your ability to fight back two of the three major killers: HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. HIV/AIDS can be prevented but continues to kill and engender tens of thousands of orphans. TB can be cured but DOTS needs to be further recognized and implemented. And all in all, these three diseases kill five million people every year, making it very difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 6 of halting and beginning to reverse the spread of infectious diseases by 2015.

Supporting all the people around the world battling HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria and endeavoring to achieve the MDGs lead to the attainment of human security, which Japan values greatly. In this context, I would like to share with you some information about the Global Fund, which Japan had the privilege and honour to create.

The Global fund to fight back HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria was established in 2002 as a follow up of Okinawa infectious disease initiatives launched by Japan in G8 Okinawa Summit held in 2000. In that summit, for the first time in G8 summit history, Japan, as the presidency of G8 invited African heads of state and government to the outreach session. Furthermore, combating infectious diseases was taken up as one of the summit's major agenda items; again the first time in G8 summit history.

This leads me to talk about nation building. I would like to say that the traditional notion of state has changed a lot due to the rapid globalization. The role of state has been changing through the rapid progress of technology and diversification of players. We learnt at school that a state consists of three basic elements: (1) people, (2) authority and (3) territory. Under the current wave of globalization, this traditional notion of state is somehow changing rapidly, but there is one element which remains. That is ordinary people. And, Japan believes that the basis of nation building is securing human resources.

In securing human resources, there are four pillars; education, health, gender and information technology.

There four pillars represent “hope” and health is the very basic element. Good health enhances resilience of a person. Fallen in a crisis, without resilient body people cannot survive.

That is why; we believe that one of the most critical challenges in development is to address health issues, including infectious diseases and public health. And, people fighting against diseases, promoting public health and enhancing people’s awareness are the core of the nation building. Thus, I praise the efforts of you all. You are indeed what in my country’s centuries long proverb describes as the castle. In my country, we have been saying that “people are the stone wall of a castle, and people are the castle itself after all”. It is a pleasure for me to say here in Ismailia, where Japan constructed Mubarak Peace Bridge that, Japan will spare no efforts to tackle in global issues, to contribute to the peace and to promote people’s happiness.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The year 2008 is also marked as the Japan Egypt Science and Technology Year. This is a platform for increasing scientific cooperation between Egypt and Japan. I hope Japanese science and technology can contribute to various field like HIV and Tuberculosis.

I thank you for your very kind attention.