Speech by Takeshi ITO, Economic Counselor, Embassy of Japan in the Arab Republic of Egypt, on the Occasion of the First Session of African Japanese Plenary Workshop on Sustainable Rice Production

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Thank you, Chairman, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

(I-1. Introduction (Name, Title))

It is indeed a great honour and pleasure for me to be given an opportunity to speak on Japanese Assistance for Producing Rice in Africa" at this first session of African Japanese Plenary Workshop on Sustainable Rice Production. I would like to express our gratitude for the initiatives of Egypt for organizing this event. This meeting will strengthen the partnership between Africa and Japan. Also, this event will make the Japan-Egypt Science and Technology Year even more successful.

(I-2. Points of This Presentation (Three Points))

Today, I would like to talk about three points. First, I will speak on the Japanese policy of assistance for Africa. Secondly, on the state of the rice production and the consumption in Japan. Third, on the rice production technology of Japan.

((II The Japanese policy of assistance for Africa))

(II-1. G8 Summit in Hokkaido – food problem as main issue)

First of all, I would like to talk about the Japanese policy of assistance for Africa. The G8 Hokkaido-Toyako Summit was held last month. Food problem and development of Africa were among the main

topics of the G8 Summit.

(II-2. TICAD IV (discussion points))

The 4th Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or TICAD IV, was held before the summit, in May this year. In the Conference, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda launched two big initiatives "Japan will double the assistance to Africa in five years" and "Japan will assist to double the rice production in Africa in ten years."

(II-3. Japanese assistance in Egypt for agriculture and water resources (Map))

The Japanese government has been working strenuously for cooperation in the field of agriculture and water resources. For instance, in the case of Egypt, we repaired 34 floating pumps in the upper Egypt, improved 4 large regulators of the Bahr Yusef Canal in middle Egypt, and established 2 mechanization centers in the Nile delta in the past twenty-some years. The Japanese government has been working to provide assistance in effective and efficient ways.

((III The state of the rice production and consumption in Japan))

(III-1. Japanese people and rice)

Second, I would like to talk about the current state of the rice production and consumption in Japan. Japanese staple food is rice, and Japan consumes far more rice than America or European countries do. Japanese people eat steamed rice in most meals. We also eat rice in various forms such as "Rice cake" and "Rice cracker." "Sushi" is now well-known and very popular in various places in the world.

(III-2. Rice Field in Japan)

There are rice fields of 2.5 million hectares (25,000km2) in Japan. It means that more than half of the Japan's whole farmland are rice fields. Japan is geographically a long country stretching from north to south, so the climate varies accordingly. However, farmers produce rice everywhere in Japan, thanks to breeding and technology.

(III-3. Multi Functions of Paddy Field)

The rice field has multi functions. Not only does it produce rice, but also it keeps the land surface water, mitigates floods, fosters underground water, etc. Some people say "rice paddy field wastes water," but it is wrong, at least in Japan. Japanese farmers use irrigation water in a circulatory system, moving water from one rice field to another in order to use effectively precious and limited water resources.

((IV The rice production technology of Japan))

(IV-1. Irrigation and Road for Agriculture)

Finally, I would like to talk about the rice production technology of Japan. Rice has been produced in paddy fields in Japan as staple food since 5th century. Rice fields in old times were small-scale, because the land of Japan is mountainous. After the World War II, for the purpose of mechanization and efficiency of agricultural production, the Japanese government decided to change rice fields so that one unit of rice field would be more than 30 are, and improved irrigation systems and agricultural roads. As a result, 60% of the rice fields in Japan have been changed accordingly.

(IV-2. Mechanization of Rice Production)

Japan's agricultural machine technology for rice production is state of the art, and it is used all over the world. The agricultural implements and machinery are regularly granted by 2KR, The 2nd Kennedy Round, from Japan to Egypt. The tractors granted 20 years ago are still widely used and are in good condition with Egyptians' appropriate maintenance.

(IV-3. Post harvesting & Organization)

Japan's technology of the post harvest such as rice cleanings and

storing is excellent as well. Training courses for third countries are held in Egypt, which aims to spread such technology to African nations. Also, Japan has long tradition and experiences in organizing farmers. Japanese farmers have jointly managed water resources and maintained irrigation facilities through "irrigation associations." Also, Japanese farmers work together by organizing "Machine unions," and improve agricultural output. Japan started "Water Management Improvement Project" in June to assist Egypt in organizing and improving irrigation association.

(V-1. Conclusion (Three points))

Now, let me summarize my own presentation. First, Japan has been working strenuously for the increase of food production in Africa. Japan announced initiatives to "double its assistance in Africa in five years" and to "double the production of rice in Africa in ten years." Second, Japan has tradition, experience, and culture on rice. The staple food of Japan is rice, and more than half of the farmland in Japan is rice field. Third, Japan has state-of-the-art technology for rice production, including technology for the areas of irrigation, machinery, and organization of farmers. Japan could be of strong help in supporting African nations' efforts for increase and improvement of rice production.

(V-2. Thank you (Thank you))

Thank you very much for your kind attention.