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**Agricultural Development:**  
**Japan's role in Fostering International Cooperation**

on the occasion of  
CGIAR Ministerial Roundtable, CGIAR Annual General Meeting 2003, Nairobi, Kenya,  
30 October 2003

Mr. and Madam Co-Chairs,  
Honorable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am greatly honored to participate in the CGIAR Ministerial Roundtable this morning and I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Kenya and CGIAR Secretariat for co-hosting this epoch-making meeting.

(The importance of agricultural development)

2. From time immemorial, it is agriculture, that has underpinned the civilizations of ancient, medieval or modern and sustained the history of the mankind up to the present day. Agriculture is the industry to provide food security to the people within the confines of the empires and the kingdoms of the past or the nation states in today's world. What makes agriculture unique as well as a challenging industry is, in my view, its inherent vulnerability; namely, agriculture remains vulnerable to the erratic or irregular changes of climatic conditions.

3. Yet, at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we, the community of the nations, have somehow managed to produce sufficient food to sustain 5.3 billion people on the globe. While the continued population growth poses a serious challenge to our global food security, I am cautiously optimistic and hopeful for our future. Human nature has proved itself in the history of mankind that confronted with tribulations, we have learned to persevere and the perseverance has taught us experience and experience has inspired us to overcome difficulties with courage and hope. To put it differently, we, human beings, are capable of producing scientific and technological breakthroughs to overcome and transcend the limitations imposed by the scarcity of resources of the day. In northern part of Japan, we suffered from chronic famines caused mainly by cold and

erratic climates up to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to our ago-researchers' sustained efforts to produce resilient varieties of Japonica rice, Japan has now achieved an agriculture of self-sufficiency in rice.

4. If we look at the global picture of current food security, it is fair to say that while overall food security has been steadily improved, it remains the stark reality that about 800 million people continue to suffer from malnutrition. In order to sustain food sufficiency for ever growing global population, it is incumbent upon us to redouble our efforts to improve agricultural productivity. In this respect, I would like to applaud the CGIAR and 16 affiliated agricultural Research Centers for their sustained efforts and contributions to the improvement of agricultural productivity through their R&D activities for more than 30 years. It is also imperative for our global community to confront squarely the issues of population growth keeping in mind the sustainability of the earth eco-system is not limitless in terms of its capacity to absorb the ever growing human population.

5. Ladies and Gentlemen, the declaration at the 1996 World Food Summit states that every nation should make efforts to achieve the worldwide food security and reduce by half the percentage of hungry people by 2015. This development goal is also enshrined as the target number two of the Millennium Development Goals. In order to achieve this goal, we must give higher priority to the development agenda of agricultural sector, and to support developing countries in their efforts to increase food production.

6. In light of the importance of agricultural development in addressing alleviation of poverty, we need to advocate its significance to the international community loud and afar. The G8 Summit held in Evian in July and the TICADIII held in Tokyo in September this year played a catalytic role in providing such a platform to draw a comprehensive strategy to mobilize resources to enhance agricultural development. G8 leaders adopted the action plan on famine, especially in Africa, including longer-term initiatives to address food insecurity. TICADIII also highlighted the need for support to agricultural development in Africa in its Chair's summary.

(Japan's role in fostering international cooperation in agricultural development)

7. Since the outset of Japan's extension of ODA to developing countries 50 years ago, Japan has consistently regarded agriculture as one of the most critical sectors in

its development cooperation. We have supported the developing countries' self-help efforts to enhance their domestic food production with a vision of making green revolution a reality for all the developing countries. Throughout all those years, Japan has supported the development of agricultural infrastructure (e.g. irrigation system), the provision of fertilizer and chemicals as well as the effective dissemination of agricultural technologies (e.g. how to use fertilizers), improvement of market access (e.g. development of transportation road to market), organization of local farmers (e.g. establishment of agricultural cooperative associations), improvement of administrative capacities (e.g. acceptance of agricultural officers as trainees). We have rendered all these assistance not only through our grants and loans, but also through our technical cooperation in which JICA has made a great contribution in building the capacity of farmers in developing countries.

8. Japan's commitment to agricultural sector remains unchanged even in recent years. In the last three years, Japan disbursed approximately 40% of total OECD/DAC countries' bilateral ODA to the agricultural sector. Similarly, in the new ODA Charter which was approved by the Japanese Cabinet in August 2003, agricultural sector is accorded high priority in Japan's ODA in the context of poverty alleviation. In supporting agricultural development, we should not forget that "poverty reduction through the agricultural development" cannot be achieved if we fail to address other development agenda of no-less importance, namely, education, health and water. For instance, access to the drinking water is essential to the farmers and the decrease of working population by infectious diseases poses a grave threat to the very existence of rural communities. Keenly aware of these issues, Japan launched Okinawa Infectious Disease Initiatives (IDI) in 2000 at the G8 Okinawa Summit and we hosted the 3rd World Water Forum this year in Kyoto.

(The crucial role of agricultural research and development to sustain agricultural development)

9. Now, I would like to discuss the crucial role of agricultural research and development to sustain agricultural development. Without R&D, both agricultural productivity and quantity improvement cannot be achieved in the long run. Agricultural R&D can produce totally new and superior species by hybridizing existing species. In today's world, agricultural research has even larger potential to realize breakthroughs with the advancement of biotechnology including genetic engineering. Taking these aspects into account, Japan has been one of the major donors to CGIAR

through its voluntary financial contribution and in-kind cooperation. For instance, Japan has been dispatching researchers to various regions in close partnership with the CGIAR research centers. One of many research achievements from such partnership was the techniques to shorten wheat-breeding periods. Indeed Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Science (JIRCAS) has been instrumental in promoting joint research with CGIAR research centers. Some of their achievements include the development of crops that grow in such difficult conditions as drought.

10. Japan believes that the assistance to agricultural research should be implemented by as many donors as possible. We also believe achievements of research activities are global public goods and therefore should be shared widely beyond time and space for the food security of the mankind. Assistance to the agricultural research means the investment to enrich the future common property of human beings. It is therefore gratifying that at G8 summit in Evian, leaders agreed on the action plan on science and technology for sustainable development, noting the need to support the CGIAR's vital role in disseminating agricultural research. In order to generate wider support for CGIAR, we, the member of the CGIAR, should spare no efforts to mobilize the support of the public and all the stakeholders in their individual countries. The Robert McNamara Seminar was one of such efforts made jointly by Japan and CGIAR. The Seminar was held twice in Tokyo in October last year and July this year, in order to introduce current topics as well as the achievement of CGIAR's research activities to the Japanese public.

(Assistance to NERICA as one of the examples)

11. Now, let me introduce you how the international research collaboration has successfully produced NERICA, one of the success stories of recent agricultural research and development. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, in his keynote speech at TICADIII, emphasized Japan's strong commitment to the research and development of NERICA in relation to poverty reduction through economic growth, which is one of the three pillars of Japan's initiative for assistance to Africa. NERICA, which stands for NEw RICE for Africa, are hybrid rice varieties developed by WARDA (West Africa Rice Development Association) by combining the superior characteristics of Asian and African rice. As is mentioned in the Chair's summary of TICADIII, NERICA is the typical and tangible example to show "the importance of technical assistance to raise productivity" through Asia - Africa cooperation in augmenting food self-sufficiency in

Africa, as well as in cutting vicious cycle of inadequate agricultural production and famine.

12. Japan noticed the epoch-making aspects of NERICA, namely, shorter maturing period and high-yielding at the very early stage of its research and has continued to support its development at several research institutes. The fact that rice is our staple food for more than thousand years has given Japan a comparative advantage in the development of rice. In 1997, only three years after the birth of NERICA in the Ivory Coast, Japan started financial contribution to WARDA on NERICA development and dispatched Japanese experts to WARDA for furthering joint research in 1998. Japan will continue her support by dispatching researchers and experts to such international research organizations like WARDA, for further development of NERICA varieties through crossbreeding of Asian and African rice. Japan will also continue her support to African countries' efforts to increase original seeds of NERICA and to disseminate the knowledge on NERICA. In July and September this year, High-level consultations on NERICA development, organized by CGIAR, was held in Tokyo with World Bank support. UNDP, NEPAD and AfDB were invited to join the consultation. Apart from these organizations, Japan has maintained cooperation with other organizations such as FAO and IFAD.

13. Prior to my visit to Kenya, I had a privilege to make a two-day visit to Uganda together with World Bank and WARDA representatives to acquire a first hand knowledge of Ugandan farmers and government efforts to develop and disseminate NERICA varieties in their own soil. I was very encouraged to witness that Ugandan farmers in uplands have now found their hope in NERICA and I was impressed by their hard work and clear sense of focus on their targets.

14. While NERICA looks promising to be a hope in African uplands. NERICA is not a panacea and has its challenge to overcome. NERICA has more than 3,000 varieties out of which less than 10 varieties have been effective and, all of the effective varieties are upland rice so far. It is therefore necessary to explore the possibility of developing lowland NERICA if we expect much wider dissemination in Africa. The dissemination of cultivation and polish skills, and the development of post harvest distribution system are no less important. Japan would like to see and welcome other participants to join us in our efforts to make NERICA firmly rooted in Africa. At the same time, it is a matter of course that NERICA is not the only agricultural produce to contribute to the poverty

reduction in Africa. Japan has already undertaken experimental cropping in collaboration with agricultural research institutes in several countries in East and Southern Africa. Similar efforts should be made to expand the outcome of research to other crops such as maize, cassava, millets and sorghums."

**(Concluding Remarks)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. We are still confronted with many challenges in the field of agriculture. To meet these challenges, we know that the prime mover to take us forward beyond frontier is the dedication of researchers, and their indomitable commitment to the welfare of the people, and most of them have gathered here under the umbrella of CGIAR. CGIAR Annual General Meeting provides a great opportunity for all of us, researchers, policy-makers and NGOs representatives to connect each other and to enhance mutual understanding, and most of all, to exchange views on current topics of international agricultural research and to explore further possibility of cooperation.

16. I would like to conclude my presentation with a quote from former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari who never fails to teach us the virtue of modesty and the need for transnational cooperation in today's world. "There are no small countries or large ones, only those that are capable of cooperation and those that are not."

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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