

Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi

Africa - The Home of Self-Endeavor

May 1, 2006

Addis Ababa

Your Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly delighted to be in the African Union (AU) Headquarters which brings together so many diverse African nations as the center of the unity and self-endeavor of Africa. Indeed Addis Ababa, I understand is often referred to as the "capital of African politics."

In October 2003, Japan hosted TICAD III, the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development. In addition to attending the Conference itself, I also had bilateral talks with 23 Heads of State and Government from Africa and Mr. Konare to exchange views on Japan-Africa cooperation. In fact I have never had so many bilateral talks in one day, and this may well deserve being registered in the Guinness Book of World Records.

In the past, the world's images of Africa were not always bright ones. Africa embraced a number of issues such as conflict, hunger, poverty and infectious diseases. The world tended to focus on these negative aspects of Africa.

In Africa today many conflicts have been overcome and we have witnessed a new breath of development supported by democracy. Africa is transforming itself from "the Home of Issues" to "the Home of Self-Endeavor." The transition from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the AU, and adoption and promotion of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) are particularly noteworthy. The creation of a mechanism by which African States accepted peer review on political and economic policies was a genuine manifestation of African ownership and self-discipline.

At the end of the Cold War the international community's "aid fatigue" cast a dark shadow on future support for Africa. Against that background, Japan convened the first TICAD in 1993 precisely to call for continued support to Africa. Since then, Japan has embraced the TICAD process as a long-term challenge, and has expanded the scope of cooperation, which now also includes private-sector development. Promoting trade and investment in Africa is crucial in assisting African countries achieve economic growth through self-help efforts.

I declared last year to be "the Year of Africa," and at the Asian African Summit in Jakarta, in April, I announced that Japan would double its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa in the three years to come. With the goal of ensuring that the WTO Doha Development Agenda will truly benefit developing countries, last December I introduced the Development Initiative for Trade to contribute to developing countries' trade promotion which will also advance the "One Village-One Product" movements.

Japan has always followed through on its commitments, based on the principle that we provide what each African country truly needs. Japan will focus its ODA in areas in which African countries identify problems and strive to solve them on their own, in short, where ownership of Africa exists.

Based on this viewpoint, we have established the three crucial pillars of TICAD, which are "consolidation of peace," "poverty reduction through economic growth," and "human-centered development."

We have stressed that human security is the key concept in the peace consolidation process. In this area we will continue to assist the AU's efforts to address the serious humanitarian crisis in Darfur, following the comprehensive peace consolidation package we introduced here in Addis Ababa this February. The deadline of the ongoing peace talks in Abuja has been extended by 48 hours, and we call for all the parties to make their maximum efforts for the successful conclusion of a peace agreement. We also support Africa's self-endeavor in addressing small arms issues and advancing counter-terrorism measures.

Japan believes that the role of the private sector is vital to accelerate economic growth in Africa, and we pay particular attention to NEPAD's trans-border programs. We will extend efficient cooperation in such areas as trade and investment promotion and infrastructure development.

Regarding human-centered development, we have drawn up an action plan to strengthen our fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria, parasitic diseases and bird flu, which are threats facing the people of Africa. We will promote our efforts by utilizing the framework of Asia-Africa cooperation.

Since becoming Prime Minister five years ago, I have pursued structural reforms in Japan so that it can better adapt to the major changes occurring in the world. Carrying out reforms is not an easy task to complete, since it causes friction with groups that are set on maintaining the status quo. However, the Japanese people have supported my reform programs, and the economy is now on a sustainable recovery track led by private-sector demand.

Africa, which used to suffer from the yoke of its bitter legacy, has stood up and taken steps toward a brighter future by invoking ownership and self-discipline, embodied in the African Union. I believe that in this century, Africa is reaching a new stage where it has to institute its own political and economic reforms.

The international community has experienced drastic changes since the end of World War II. When the United Nations was established in 1945 there were only four independent African countries and the UN had only 51 Member States. Now, those numbers have increased to 53 and 191, respectively. Having overcome the devastation of the War, Japan now plays a major role for the peace and stability of the world as a peace-loving nation.

Despite this, the United Nations, including the Security Council and its structure, has not adapted to these changes. Late President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the first sub-Saharan African leader to win independence from colonialism after World War II, stated that in history, Africa had been spoken of by others for too many years. For Africa, there is an urgent need to reform and create a new history of Africa which is spoken of by Africans themselves. We must realize UN Security Council reform without delay, so that the African voice is heard more in the Security Council. We would like to strengthen collaboration with our African colleagues to this end.

Japan also wants to enhance its cooperation with African countries in meeting new challenges faced by the entire international community, such as global environmental issues and energy security.

Having overcome colonialism and the Cold War in the last century, we are now entering a new era to shape a new international order. I mentioned earlier that Africa is changing from "the Home of Issues" to "the Home of Self-Endeavor." In this 21st century I am convinced that through reforms, Africa will show us its real dynamism as it boldly advances as "Africa standing on its own."