

## **STATEMENT**

**By**

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AT THE**

## **TOKYO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFRICA (TICAD II)**

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**Mr. Chairman  
Friends of Africa**

It is a singular honour and privilege for me to be with you. The Government of Japan's sustained interest in Africa is a mainstay of the international solidarity which Africa requires to attain its full potential.

The continent has come a long way since TICAD I. But, today, the tidal waves of the global crisis are landing on our shores. It seems certain that despite continued momentum in many countries, Africa's standard of living will decline this year. The test is whether we can prevent a further slide in hard-earned economic and social progress in the short run, while keeping our focus with TICAD on the longer-term fundamentals. I want to present five longer-term challenges.

The first of these challenges is financing Africa's development through improved aid, debt and investment. Until growth reaches a certain level and breadth, and until domestic resource mobilization reaches a certain level of reliability, aid has a true relevance to fostering Africa's growth. The focus for us and our donor friends ought to be not whether aid, but how to enlarge and make aid more effective. African countries need to ensure that whatever aid they receive is supported by good policy environments and is for programmes in which Africans take full ownership.

Enormous debt burdens and repayments counter exactly what aid is intended to achieve. Giving with one hand while taking more with the other is more than a contradiction: it is a problem to be corrected. The most forthcoming response to the debt issue is the Bank/Fund Highly Indebted Poorest Countries' (HIPC) initiative. But to date, the number of African countries helped has been far too small and the inflexibilities have been too large. The World Bank's Development Committee has just recommended that these problems must be addressed in a revised HIPC. We should have solidarity with them in such an effort and should be intellectually aggressive

in suggesting meaningful reforms.

The second challenge is the need to maintain focus on Africa's human resource development... the bedrock of reducing poverty. The biggest potential progress for human development in Africa is through actions which allow women to reach their full potential. Literally, the progress of societies as a whole is at stake. Particularly in a time of economic crisis, we must not lose the will to make investments in the people of Africa, particularly for girls and women.

The third challenge is harnessing the enormous potential of information technology to help leapfrog Africa's development. On Africa's side, regulatory environments must be improved. Africa and its partners should increasingly focus on exploiting the opportunities to strengthen telecommunications infrastructures and numerous practical applications of information for development.

The fourth major challenge is that of regional cooperation and integration. We have a lot of work to do on institution building, crafting policy coherence between countries, and retrofitting our industries to be competitive in regional and global markets. Moreover, as we have seen in the Great Lakes crisis, political and economic solutions must increasingly be found at the sub-regional level. For official programs working in Africa, the key challenge is to craft bilateral programs which more solidly bridge countries and interests.

The fifth challenge flows from the fourth. An Africa preparing to trade across its borders, also prepares to trade with the world. The same concepts of competitiveness apply. To fulfill the promise of TICAD and the Bandung Framework for Asia-Africa Cooperation, we need to develop concrete and workable mechanisms that can deliver the fruits of South-South cooperation.

At the Economic Commission for Africa we are working hand in glove with our partners in response to these challenges.

- ECA will devote the 1999 session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance and Planning to the issue of financing development, with special emphasis on improving aid effectiveness through better aid management and coordination.

- In April this year we held a major international conference on "African Women and Economic Development: Investing in our Future". Many follow-on initiatives are under way.

- ECA is leading the African Information Society Initiative, a public-private action framework to raise policy awareness and build information and communication infrastructure in Africa.

- To promote regional cooperation, ECA is working with the sub-regional economic communities on self-financing mechanisms and institutional effectiveness.

- And in concert with our sister organization, ESCAP, and with a series of

agreements with Asian governments, we have established programs of South-South cooperation.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I look forward to discussion of these five challenges, to attaining a better future for Africa, and to the exchange of views which this excellent forum provides us all.

Thank you