

Janneh proposes six areas for Japanese assistance to Africa

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Tokyo, Japan , 15 December 2011 (ECA) - The Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa today outlined six key areas in which Japan could focus their investments and assistance to Africa, explaining that these are areas in which investments would be mutually beneficial to the two sides.

Mr. Abdoulie Janneh who is currently visiting Japan to prod their industrialists for greater involvement in Africa explained to members of the Association of African Economy and Development (AFRECO), also known as the Japan ECA Committee, the first area would be to support the strengthening of governance.

He said that although Africans had taken steps to improve their political and economic governance which in turn has laid the foundation for better economic performance, "if Japan supports initiatives like the African Peer Review Mechanism as well as those taken to reduce corruption in the continent then it would have helped to create an enabling environment for its companies to do even more business in Africa".

He said that one issue which is of particular concern in Africa relates to illicit financial flows conservatively estimated by the Global Financial Integrity Report to have been about \$854 billion since 1970 and 2008.

"It would be important for Japan to support efforts to stem such outflows which will not only improve governance in Africa but also complement resources available to boost investment and promote development within the continent", Mr. Janneh urged.

The second area, according to the UN official, would be increased investment in productive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing because, "if Japanese companies invest in Africa as they did in Asia this will help to promote economic transformation and create much needed jobs", he added.

He argued that investments in African countries would enable Japanese companies to take advantage of growing regional integration by using such locations as a base of exports to third countries.

"A key constraint to scaling up productive activities in Africa derives from infrastructural constraints and there is great scope for Japan to contribute to improving the situation as its companies have the capacity to build world class infrastructure while its financial institutions can support the process through structured financing", he explained.

He regretted that the total merchandise trade between Japan and Africa amounted to about \$24 billion in 2010 as opposed to China whose trade with Africa was estimated to be about \$120 billion in the same year.

He also observed the fact that Japan's share of exports to an expanding African economy fell from 4% in 2000 to 2.7% last year, calling on Japan to take advantage of increased economic integration in Africa.

The third area of interest would be for Japan to take advantage of new technologies and opportunities, especially as there is growing global consensus about the need to shift to a green economy to promote environmental sustainability and to adapt to the damaging effects of climate change.

"As a global leader in ICT-related industries and activities, Japan can contribute to efforts to scale-up the use of innovation, science and technology in Africa through investments in the continent as well as in supporting capacity building activities", Mr. Janneh explained.

He cited the examples of climate change and environmental negotiations such as the forthcoming Rio+20 Conference to show that Africa has high stakes in global economic processes.

He said that Japan could upscale its cooperation with Africa by appreciating and supporting Africa's positions and priorities in global processes such as G8 and G20 meetings, negotiations at the World Trade Organization, in its relations with international financial institutions and of course at the climate change and environmental negotiations mentioned earlier.

"The issue of ensuring that Africa's voice is heard is of continuing concern to the continent and relations with Japan will undoubtedly be enhanced if it shows empathy and appreciation for Africa's needs and concerns", Janneh advised.

Turning to ECA, he said that "we in ECA expect that as the second largest contributor to the UN, Japan should use its influence in that body to support our efforts to promote the social and economic development of Africa in accordance with our mandate".

He also highlighted the existence of the TICAD mechanism to say that all these possible areas of intervention would be easily accommodated under the four pillars of the TICAD IV Action Plan which are boosting economic growth, achieving the Millennium Development Goals, peace consolidation and good governance; and addressing environmental issues and climate change.



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But he stressed the urgent need for upscaling cooperation between Japan and Africa by increasing the amount and scope of official development assistance to Africa. "A starting point would be to meet the commitments made in Monterrey and the Gleneagles Summit of the G8".

"Japan was the pioneer of some of the most successful development and cooperation models and used its knowledge and experience to mutual advantage in its relations with Asia. There is no reason why it should not do so in upscaling its relations with an emergent Africa", Janneh concluded.

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