

## What Japan-Africa Summit highlighted on African Science, technology

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Now that the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), a Summit-level international policy forum dedicated to African development, convened in Yokohama, Japan from 28 to 30 May, 2008 has ended, it is time to take stock of what Africa might have pushed through in the areas of science and technology.

It is encouraging to note that participants at the Summit took note of the fact the need to revitalize agriculture, that something be done about water management and mitigation measures against climate change take centre stage. Participants noted that growth of the agricultural sector in Africa were vital for economic growth and food security. They emphasized the importance of tackling the sharp increases in food prices and its adverse effects on poverty. The Conference noted that to improve food security, it is necessary for countries, especially those with low agricultural productivity, to increase agricultural production and productivity. Given that more than two-thirds of African people reside in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their income and livelihood, the sector is important for economic growth. The African Heads of State welcomed Japanese initiatives such as the doubling of rice production in Africa, and noted that New Rice for Africa (NERICA) is a good example of what research could do for African development.

It is gratifying to note that leaders expressed their expectations for improving rural livelihoods and business opportunities through the promotion of high-value and niche crops, use of high-yielding seeds, and expansion of agri-business and agricultural processing. It is also our hope that the leaders would renew their commitment to prioritize and address health-related challenges, particularly in light of high maternal and under-five mortality rates and the prevalence of infectious diseases, laying special emphasis on addressing the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. It is worthy to note that the African leaders took note of the need to strengthen health systems but they must urgently address the training and retention of health workers. On climate change, leaders noted the need for assistance to African countries in view of their vulnerability and relative limited capacity to address negative impacts of climate change. Noting that Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change even though it contributes the least to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, participants agreed that action is needed now, and resources sought through new and innovative means while using existing mechanisms.

They indicated the importance of promoting development and environmental protection in a compatible way, emphasizing the necessity of incorporating sustainable development into national development policies. They highlighted Africa need to enhanced access to clean and affordable energy through use of appropriate technology in order to promote economic development and improve the quality of life. African leaders also highlighted critical roles of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change, conserving biodiversity and enhancing rural development. They shared the urgent need for concrete actions to curb deforestation and forest degradation as well as to promote afforestation through the provision of necessary funding and the application of sustainable management to forests, notably those in the Congo Basin.

Some African countries shared information about mitigation initiatives such as a sea level rise program, national adaptation plans, afforestation and desertification programs, and forest conservation funds.

The necessity to improve the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol was also indicated. Calling on the need to build preventive mechanisms, leaders called for assistance in building credible early warning systems against natural disasters in protecting the most vulnerable populations.

The Conference appreciated the "Cool Earth Promotion Programme," announced by Japan in January 2008, with the aim of encouraging active participation by all countries in an effective framework to fight climate change beyond the Kyoto Protocol. Attaching importance to reducing GHG emissions while pursuing economic growth, African leaders responded positively to Japan's invitation to the "Cool Earth Partnership". In recognition of this, the Conference welcomed the establishment of Japan-Africa Cool Earth Partnership.

Some participants introduced their initiatives and activities on water and sanitation, including cyclic water resources management, water harvesting and water governance.

They said work on water management should be intensified and called for support on the issue of the transfer of innovative water resources management and irrigation to increase agricultural productivity. They said this would ensure that adequate water supplies for household, industrial and agricultural use was re-emphasized.

The importance of gender perspective in discussing water and sanitation was also highlighted as collecting drinking water, engaging in agricultural work and securing foods are generally done by women in many African societies.