

SPEECH BY H.E. MR HIROSHI NAKAGAWA, AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD GENERAL MEETING OF THE
COALITION OF AFRICAN RICE DEVELOPMENT (CARD)
IN ARUSHA ON MAY 18, 2010

The Honourable Mr Stephen Wasira, Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr Kenzo Oshima, Senior Vice President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Dr Namanga Ngongi, President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be taking part in this memorable occasion of the third General Meeting of CARD. As the Ambassador of Japan to Tanzania, I would like to warmly welcome all the participants to this event. I would also like to congratulate the secretariat of JICA and AGRA for arranging this meeting.

The Coalition for African Rice Development is a multi-stakeholder initiative launched at the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) held in Yokohama in May 2008. The CARD Initiative is one of the very important outcomes of TICAD IV and is an element of the Yokohama Action Plan, aimed at doubling rice production by 2018.

Eradicating poverty in rural areas and attaining food security are of the most important challenges facing many sub-Saharan countries. To accomplish this goal, it is vital that the agricultural sector is developed as a business. This means to elevate agriculture from mere subsistence farming, and turning it into an efficient industry. Food production has to be increased in order to meet the growing demand for food and to improve self-sufficiency. To cope with these challenging demands, the approach should be to make the agricultural sector a more efficient,

more productive industry. I believe the CARD Initiative provides a very useful framework for those countries trying to accomplish these objectives.

Agriculture is influenced by nature and this has to be taken into account when formulating the National Rice Development Strategy, or NRDS. Each country's natural conditions should be considered in the planning towards the doubling of rice production. Twelve countries have already formulated their NRDS and have progressed to the implementation stage.

I imagine that during the implementation stage, many countries will be facing various difficulties and obstacles, which they could not have anticipated beforehand. It is my hope that this meeting will be used by participants as a good opportunity to share information, as they go forward to the next level of development.

Another eleven countries are expected to join CARD during this meeting. We welcome their participation and hope they will benefit from the experience and knowledge of the first group.

Arusha is a fitting venue for this general meeting to take place, only two weeks after the Ministerial follow-up meeting of TICAD IV which was held here and which was attended by more than 400 people, including 30 ministerial level delegates. During that meeting it was recognised that despite the current very difficult economic conditions, most of the commitments by Japan incorporated in the Yokohama Action Plan have nearly been achieved already, much sooner than what had been anticipated. A good example of Japan's commitment being fulfilled, is the doubling of our ODA by the year 2012.

Under the dual principle of African "ownership" and international "partnership", Japan has faithfully been implementing its commitments as was confirmed by Foreign Minister Okada at the ministerial level meeting.

Likewise I would like to implore all the participants of this CARD meeting to take up your ownership in this international partnership and do your utmost to attain the goals of CARD.

It is further appropriate that this meeting takes place in this region, where the lower Moshi area is one of the prime examples of increased rice productivity as a result of Japanese assistance. Sixty kilometres to the east is a project site where Japan has been providing technical and financial assistance to the rice farming sector. The site consists of 1,100 hectares of paddy and they have already reached the inspiring yield of 6 tons per hectare. Farmers are enjoying a much higher standard of living and through their ability to build schools, dispensaries and brick houses, the lives of all those connected to them have improved as well.

I was told that after this general meeting the secretariat is arranging for a study tour to the project. I would like to invite you to participate in the tour in order to witness the remarkable results for yourselves.

The CARD Initiative is the vehicle with which to make this kind of success story commonplace all over the African continent. It is a very ambitious challenge, but like any other large project, the most important thing is for each participant to involve himself in this movement with confidence. The dedication and enthusiasm of the stakeholders is what makes the impossible, possible.

I would like to conclude my remarks, using this opportunity to reaffirm our conviction and dedication to achieving CARD's goals.

Thank you, Asanteni.