

[Opening Session]

Opening Remarks by **Kan Suzuki**

Senior Vice-Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants in this 8th Japan Education Forum (JEF). On behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), one of the organizers of the program, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you.

This forum has been held annually since 2004 with the objective of supporting the self-reliant development of education in developing countries to achieve the “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs) and “Education for All” (EFA), toward which the international community has been making concerted efforts.

This year we focus on the relationship between educational development and local communities. By introducing Japan’s “community schools” initiative, which seeks community-based management by adequately reflecting the opinions of local communities and parents, we hope that this forum will contribute to the efforts to achieve “School for All” to improve education in developing countries through joint efforts of schools, local communities and governments.

In post-modern societies, the states’ social systems alone cannot effectively address diversified social challenges such as the healthy development of young people and prevention of delinquency. Local communities have become important partners in this effort. There are now high expectations of “community schools,” in which parents and volunteers in local communities become school supporters and collaborate with teachers to improve the school administration and management and help teachers develop their professional skills.

Together with Professor Ikuyo Kaneko, one of the keynote speakers at today’s forum, I proposed the concept of community schools in Japan. After making various efforts, we were able to make the concept a reality when the Local Educational Administration Law was revised in 2004 to institutionalize community schools. Since I was appointed Senior Vice-Minister of MEXT, I have made further efforts to promote *jukugi* (careful contemplation and lively discussions) among people in local communities and the “new public commons school” so that community schools will be widely introduced in Japan.

Building a good relationship between schools and communities is imperative to achieve “good schools and good education.” This is true in both developing and developed countries.

For example, the School Management Committee Support Project, which Japan is promoting in Africa through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), also emphasizes the importance of the school-community relationship. The project supports in making school management committees functioning properly, in order to improve the educational environment and enhance the quality of basic education.

Professor Kaneko is a pioneer in introducing community schools in Japan. I am sure his lecture will be a thought-provoking one for those who are promoting local communities’ participation in schools to improve education in developing countries, too.

Another keynote speaker, Professor Abou Diarra, from the Ministry of Education, Literacy and National Languages of Mali, is in charge of the School Management Committee Support Project that I mentioned earlier in his country. I expect that he will introduce to us various undertakings in Mali.

In addition, we are also honoured to have four panelists from Japan and abroad. Different countries have different social backgrounds and different needs and ways for local communities in participating school management. I am sure that there would be lively discussions and informative presentations in the afternoon. I hope that the session will provide us useful input for their future activities.

In closing, I would like to thank all of those who gave their time and effort to organize this forum. I sincerely hope that today’s forum will be a productive one to promote the self-reliant development of education by developing countries and the educational cooperation that supports such endeavours.

Thank you

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Opening Remarks by **Yutaka Banno**
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Japan

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants from all over the world who have been contributed to international efforts on the key subject of education, for attending the Japan Education Forum (JEF) VIII.

In Japan, February and March are known as the “Season of entrance examinations” when parents and children become more aware of the future as well as the issue of quality and quantity of education, in experiencing entrance examinations.

Here in Japan, people discuss the quality and quantity of education on this occasion, but such worries may seem fortunate from the international or global viewpoint. Many children all over the world face challenges and difficulties even before the initial stage of education, where the quality and quantity of education cannot be measured. Moreover, recent developments in the Middle East including Egypt make me wonder how children live under such circumstances.

Prime Minister Kan aims at a society in which human suffering is reduced to a minimum, and social injustice is removed. In order to realize such a society, education would be a key tool. I believe that education is the greatest weapon for us to solve global issues confronting each country, including terrorism, poverty, and hunger. In this context, I pledge that Japan will make utmost efforts for supporting children who are facing difficulties in gaining opportunities for education.

I sincerely hope for the great success of this forum.

Thank you very much.