

[Opening Session]

Opening Remarks by Isao Kiso

**Director-General for International Affairs on Behalf of Masaharu Nakagawa
Senior Vice-Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants in the 7th Japan Education Forum (JEF VII) today. 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 is being held with the objective of supporting developing countries' own initiatives for educational development to achieve "Education for All" (EFA), a goal toward which the international community has been making concerted efforts. Through these initiatives, there has been a steady increase in the number of children enrolled in primary schools in developing countries. However, there are still many challenges to be addressed such as enhancing the quality of education, reducing gender and regional disparities and promoting literacy and early childhood education. We also face new challenges such as recruiting enough teachers to cope with the soaring number of students and preparing the next path (e.g., secondary school, vocational training) for students finishing primary schools. Furthermore, we are seeing new needs in educational development as some developing countries undergo rapid economic growth.

Under these circumstances, with just five years left before the target year of 2015 for achieving the goals of EFA, the purpose of today's forum is to discuss the remaining issues for achieving EFA by 2015. Furthermore, we would like this Forum to be an opportunity to start thinking about education beyond 2015.

Today, we are very honored to have Ambassador Koïchiro Matsuura, former Director-General of UNESCO, as special lecturer and Dr. Fay King Chung, former Minister of Education, Sports and Culture of Zimbabwe, as keynote speaker. As you know, Ambassador Matsuura served as the head of UNESCO, the United Nations lead agency for EFA, for ten years. Dr. Chung has played prominent roles in UNICEF and UNESCO after her remarkable career in Zimbabwe including serving as Minister of Education.

I would also like to thank the ten distinguished panelists from Japan and abroad for attending this forum. I am sure that lively discussions will take place in the afternoon sessions on the theme of this forum that I mentioned earlier.

Our Ministry is actively engaged in educational development cooperation to support developing countries, including granting scholarships to international students, implementing the "International Cooperation Initiative," in which the knowledge of universities is utilized in developing models for international cooperation, dispatching public school teachers to developing countries through Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and supporting literacy education and the "terakoya" (Community Learning Centre: CLC) movement through UNESCO. Our Ministry would like to continue promoting international cooperation in education, utilizing Japan's experience, knowledge and human resources.

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 provide a good opportunity for fruitful discussions on the autonomous development of education by developing countries and the educational cooperation that supports such endeavors.