

[Opening Session]

Opening Remarks by Hideki Niwa State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much for coming to the 12th Japan Education Forum today. On behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, I would like to make brief remarks to all the participants here.

This forum, jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Hiroshima University, University of Tsukuba and MEXT, has been held annually since 2004. Practitioners at the forefront of bilateral or multilateral cooperation in education as well as experts in this area are invited to exchange views on how international cooperation in education can support the self-reliant educational development and ownership of developing countries.

The theme of this year's forum is "Education for All (EFA): What have been achieved and future challenges beyond 2015." As you all know, 2015 is the target year for achieving the Dakar Framework for Action, which started in 2000. This year is also important for discussing and adopting the post-2015 agenda for international educational cooperation.

With regard to the Dakar Framework for Action, MEXT has promoted educational cooperation through UNESCO projects and dispatched elementary to high-school in-service teachers to achieve the EFA goals.

The international community including Japan has made united efforts to achieve EFA. Through these efforts, some of the targets such as enrolment and literacy rates are being reached. However, achieving all EFA goals remains a difficult task. There are still regions which are far from achieving EFA, and the quality of education is a major issue.

Currently, UNESCO is working with various entities including the governments of the member states, international organizations, NGOs and experts to review the past achievements for EFA and to study what should be done after 2015. At the World Education Forum held in Incheon in May of this year, the post-2015 education agenda will be adopted. This will determine the educational goals to be achieved by 2030.

We believe this forum will provide a good opportunity before the World Education Forum in May, to discuss post-2015 educational cooperation, inviting knowledgeable and experienced experts to review past achievements for EFA, clarify problems, and gain a shared understanding.

In November of last year, Japan and UNESCO co-organized the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), in which the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration was adopted.

As ESD is an integral part of improving the quality of education and to determine the direction of education in the future, it should be included in the post-2015 education agenda. Japan will continue to promote ESD after 2015 along with the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP), acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2014, as follow-up to the UN Decade of ESD.

MEXT will further strengthen its activities for the promotion of a sustainable future. I hope that this forum will be a productive one and that sharing the knowledge of each country through today's lectures and discussions will contribute to improving the quality of education.

In closing, I would like to thank all of those who gave their time and effort to organize this forum. I hope today's forum will provide meaningful insights to your future endeavours.