

[Opening Session]

Opening remarks by Kazuyuki Nakane Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan

1. Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), one of the co-hosting organizations, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Japan Education Forum XII.

2. Cabinet decision on the Development Cooperation Charter, to mark the 60th anniversary of Japan's ODA

Last year was the 60th anniversary of the start of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA). Over the past 60 years, the situation surrounding ODA within Japan and abroad has drastically changed. Private funding, almost three times as much as ODA, is flowing into developing countries. At the same time, various entities including private companies, local governments and NGOs are now playing important roles in solving development issues and promoting sustainable development.

The Development Cooperation Charter being formulated is built on Japan's past efforts to pursue peace. During the last 60 years, Japan's ODA has avoided one-way assistance and placed the highest priority on collaboration with developing countries, working together as equal partners, to foster the ownership of the people to promote self-reliant development. Education is without a doubt an important part of these efforts conducted with developing countries.

When I went to Laos last month, I visited the Laos-Japan Human Resource Development Institute, established with Japan's ODA, and exchanged candid views with students at the institute. I was impressed by the students studying diligently with shining eyes, and I strongly felt the importance of international educational cooperation.

3. Target year of the EFA Dakar Framework for Action and the MDGs

As 2015 is the target year of the Dakar Framework for Action to advance Education for All (EFA) and of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which the international community is endeavoring to achieve, this is an important year when the follow-up agenda will be decided for both EFA and the MDGs.

With regard to EFA, UNESCO has published a report on the progress made every year. In this target year for the Dakar Framework for Action, a report is being made under the title "What did we achieve?" This report will sum up past endeavors to promote EFA. Today, we have invited Prof. Aaron Benavot, Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report. He will discuss the actions made for EFA from a global viewpoint. There have been major improvements in different areas of education, including universal primary education. But there still remain various issues in Africa. We have also invited Director Eschetu Asfaw from the Plan and Resources Mobilization Directorates, Ministry of Education, Ethiopia. Director Asfaw will discuss the achievement and future challenges of EFA in his country.

Japan has placed a high priority on education. Education is an important aspect of human security and of sustainable development. Japan announced that it would provide 3.5 billion dollars in the education sector during the five years from 2011 till the end of this year to support a total of 25 million children. We would like to work with you and the relevant people to promote effective educational cooperation to achieve the policy targets.

4. Setting new goals

The new EFA agenda after Dakar will be identified at the World Education Forum 2015 to be held in May of this year in Incheon, South Korea.

With regard to the post-2015 development agenda, which will be a guidepost for the development areas after 2015, the Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was adopted in July of last year. Furthermore, at the end of last year, the Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General was announced to summarize past discussions. The government-level talks started last month on the post-2015 development agenda and other discussions are going on to adopt the follow-up agenda at the United Nations summit in September this year.

Japan believes that human security will be an important principle for the post-2015 development agenda. Human security focuses on individual people to protect them and to develop their capacities. Japan's Education Cooperation Policy 2011-2015 states: "Education is a human right that should be equally enjoyed by all. Education enables individuals to enhance their potential and capacities and to lead their lives with dignity. At the same time, it plays a critical role in countries' social and economic development." Based on this, Japan would like to continue contributing actively to the discussions to establish a follow-up agenda.

5. Conclusion

It is important to review past achievements and to discuss future challenges once again at this forum.

In this sense, this forum provides an important opportunity for experts in educational cooperation to gather from Japan and abroad. I hope that lively discussions will take place and that today's forum will be a productive one at which we give further thought to future educational cooperation, the EFA agenda after Dakar, and the post-2015 development agenda. Thank you.