From EFA to SDG4

The Changing Agenda and Japan's Contribution

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International community and, above all, developing countries, have been pursuing strong efforts toward achieving the international education goals. From the decade of Jomtien Declaration in 1990, we continuously emphasized Education for All, first by universalizing primary education, at the same time focusing on learning. In practice, the decade of 1990s saw most developing countries to place their priority to expanding access, boys and girls. The vision of Jomtien looked to 2000 to achieve its goals.

In 2000, progresses made were re-assessed, and found that despite visible improvement in access, clear challenges remained in reaching the disadvantaged children who faced multiple barriers to education: poverty, gender, social notion, language, etc. We gathered in Dakar and reaffirmed the spirit of Jomtien Declaration, and set clear 6 goals in the Framework for Action.　At the same time, the year 2000 was a historical year, as we entered into the new millennium, and adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Education goals were included in 2 (as usually recognized) of 8 MDG goals, thus education was regarded as one of important instruments to achieve our comprehensive development goals. Both MDGs and Dakar Framework for Action set 2015 as the year to achieve the goals, but looking carefully, statements of education goals included in MDGs and those corresponding goals of the Dakar Framework for Action were not exactly the same.

Last year, in 2015, the international community adopted a new global development framework: Sustainable Development Goals comprising 17 goals, in which education goal is placed at the fourth. This education goal that consists of 7 targets (with 3 additional targets relating to means of implementation) is exactly the same as what the education community adopted in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

Throughout this evolution of endeavor to improving education, words that have been used in framing the goal statement, in fact seems to be mostly unchanged. In reality, however, the notion of priority with which we undertook various initiatives apparently seems changing: from access (under universalization), to quality (versus access), to

equity and learning.

Meantime, most developing countries implemented their education development plan by working with countries and organizations that provide international cooperation, or aid. And the aid discourse also has evolved significantly during the last quarter of century, most notably encapsulated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. More recently, producing expected results has become "conditions" for donors to release fund which they have committed to provide.

In this panel session, I would like to raise some issues for all of you to consider together:

- The actual way we place emphasis among education issues is determined by certain factors - education sector priority is influenced by domestic politics and the trend of international cooperation.
- We continuously emphasized right-based education. Will this hold in the SDGs framework which places multiple other strong perspectives?
- The context in which educational development is pursued is changing, from poverty reduction, MDGs and SDGs. This gives smaller space (or bigger role) of education. How do we respond to this?
- How much do we know how to successfully tackle inequality (in the face of cultural, social and religious crash/coexistence) and improve learning?
- How can we construct a new financing mechanism for SDG4 that has a broader and more ambitious sets of targets?
- In response to increasing fad toward results-based financing, what results and outcomes are truly instrumental in achieving results on the ground?
- How can we engage broader partners?

And importantly, for the main theme of this year's JEF,
- How Japan can enhance its contribution building on its strength and experiences?