

Remarks by the Representative of Delegation of Japan

Thematic Discussions on Agriculture

Commission on Sustainable Development

5 May, 2008

First of all, let me join previous speakers in congratulating the election of the Chair, H.E. Francis Nhema, Minister of Environment and Tourism of Zimbabwe and other bureau members. Our delegation will spare no efforts in contributing to the success of the CSD XVI, in close collaboration with the bureau members.

Among the wide-ranging issues related to agriculture, allow me to point out three points, namely, international assistance in the field of agriculture, recent global hike in food prices, and bio-fuels.

(Assistance in Agriculture)

As a primary advocate of the concept of human security, Japan puts emphasis on assistance in agriculture and fisheries. According to the OECD/DAC data, the volume of Japan's assistance in this area in 2005 was the largest among DAC countries, accounting for about 32 % of global assistance given to this area.

Japan has been implementing various forms of assistance, such as Grant Aid for Underprivileged Farmers which is designed to assist the self-help efforts of developing countries to improve food production; assistance through grant aid and loans to development of irrigation facilities and improvement of distribution systems;

technical cooperation by accepting trainees and dispatching experts for improvement of agricultural technology and fostering farmers' organizations. We also assist small-scale, community-level activities through NGOs using the Trust Fund for Human Security.

As a concrete effort for increasing the agricultural productivity of Africa, Japan provides support for the development and dissemination of New Rice for Africa (NERICA). In addition to assisting the African Rice Center in Cote d'Ivoire, Japan has supported the dissemination projects through the UNDP and FAO, and dispatched technical experts on NERICA dissemination to Uganda, with a view to promote dissemination in East Africa.

(Food Prices)

Soaring food prices are posing imminent and serious global challenges. Threat of hunger and malnutrition is increasing, and the high prices have brought about social unrest. As the host of the TICAD IV and the Chair of the G8, Japan believes that this issue must be a subject of in-depth discussions with a strong sense of urgency.

The issue of food prices is a multi-faceted issue that requires a wide range of policy responses and consolidations. Means to address immediate needs, such as emergency assistance and social safety nets for the poorest, should be introduced without delay. Deliberations on prescriptions for the longer term agenda should be accelerated, such as trade, bio-fuels, and improving food productivity, taking into account needs for adaptation to climate change.

(Bio-fuels)

Usage of biomass including bio-fuels not only contributes to the mitigation of the effect of climate change but leads to the promotion of rural economies and thus leads to the new frontier of agriculture.

As paragraph 30 of the Secretary General's Report E/CN.17/2008/3 points out, when we address the issue of production of bio-fuels, "competition and trade-offs for arable land, water and other inputs used for food production, upward pressure on food prices and other socio-economic and environmental costs are among the issues to be assessed."

Japan agrees with this argument, as it believes that bio-fuels must be promoted in a way that does not negatively affect the supply of food or environment.

Thank you for your attention.