

COMMENTS MADE BY AMBASSADOR STUART COMBERBACH
DEAN OF THE AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC CORPS - TOKYO
OPENING SESSION - 2012 AFRICA DAY SYMPOSIUM
UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY - TOKYO - 25 MAY 2012

(Their Imperial Highnesses/His Imperial Highness)

The Honourable Parliamentary Vice Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Mr Toshiyuki Kato

His Excellency, Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of the NEPAD
Planning and Coordinating Agency

Professor Konrad Osterwalder - our distinguished host for
today and close friend of the African Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Guests and Panelists

Excellencies, Colleagues of the ADC

Ladies and Gentlemen - Friends of Africa

On behalf of my Colleagues of the African Diplomatic Corps
here in Tokyo, allow me to extend to you all a very warm
welcome to the 2012 Africa Day Symposium - jointly
organised by the University and the ADC, with the generous
support of and participation by the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of Japan

This is the 11th edition of the Africa Day Symposium and it
has now become something of a tradition and a set-piece
event within our collective annual calendar.

Last year, in solidarity with the prevailing sentiment across
Japan in the wake of the devastating earthquake which struck
the north-east Tohoku region on 11 March, the ADC took the
collective decision to cancel both the planned Africa Day
Symposium and Africa Day Reception; and to donate the budget
set-aside for those two events to the Fund set up by the
Japanese Red Cross for the victims of the triple disasters
of that terrible day.

As we planned for this year's Symposium, we decided to
maintain the same theme we had selected for the 2011
Symposium - namely 'The Development of Hard Infrastructure
in Africa : The Role of Japan'.

We did so in order to align our focus here with that of the
African Union whose 18th Summit meeting, in Addis Ababa, in
January this year, focused on the need to Boost Intra-
African Trade : and which identified the lack of adequate
physical infrastructure across the continent as one of the

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major impediments to development, and to the accelerated integration of Africa into the global economy.

As the process of regional integration progresses, and as all of Africa's regional economic communities progress towards free trade areas or even common customs unions, it is the lack of adequate road and railway linkages between and amongst our countries ; the lack of adequate or operationally efficient sea-port capacity along our coasts; and, even more fundamentally, it is the lack of adequate electric power generating and transmission capacity, right across the continent, which is hindering if not undermining regional and continental development; which is delaying regional and continental integration : and which is constraining Africa - notwithstanding its wealth and its undeniable industrial and manufacturing potential - from being able to effectively compete in the global market place and to fully integrate into global supply and production chains.

Fully cognisant of this, our leaders and our continental institutions have dedicated themselves to developing a continent-wide blueprint for infrastructure-development - prioritising, in each sub-region, a number of key projects which, when implemented or when completed, will indeed have a transformative developmental impact, bringing with them significant benefits and a qualitative improvement in life-style and conditions for the nations and peoples affected.

This blueprint - Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, or PIDA - was fully endorsed by Africans Heads of State and Government at their Summit meeting in January 2012.

And this was a timely development. With an estimated sum of US\$ 90 billion of investment required, each year, for infrastructure development in Africa, it is clear that the nations of Africa, alone, are unlikely to raise the necessary finances : and that enormous scope and opportunity exist, therefore, for foreign investors, both private and institutional, and by way of a variety of approaches - including through public private partnership arrangements - to join with us, as Africans, as we embark upon the infrastructural transformation of our continent.

A recent Japan-SADC Infrastructure Investment Seminar, held here in Tokyo, was heavily over-subscribed by Japanese private sector participants. This reflected a definite and

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growing interest, by the Japanese private sector, in looking for bankable trading and investment opportunities - not only in the SADC region, but indeed right across the continent ; and it served as a indicator, to the Government of Japan, that more thought must be given to how to support, in an effective and practical manner, the desire of the Japanese private sector to seriously look at these opportunities on our continent.

As we meet here today, the next major Japan-Africa Summit, TICAD V, is just one year away. Already, preparations in terms of defining the shape and desired outcomes of that Summit, are under way. Many of us have just returned from a Ministerial level TICAD meeting, in Marrakech, Morocco, where - as the Final Communique reflects - probable priority-areas for TICAD V were flagged, and will be further developed as we move forward towards June 2013 - the date of TICAD V.

The need for further cooperation between Japan and Africa, under the TICAD umbrella, in the area of infrastructure-development is clearly identified as a priority-sector : both in terms of mobilising significantly more Japanese private sector investment and, of great importance as well, in terms of directing Japanese ODA funding in support of Japanese private sector activities in Africa.

These, then, are the broad parameters of our Africa Day Symposium this morning.

We are honoured, and delighted, to have with us the CEO of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency - an absolutely key component of the AU structures and the component, along with the African Development Bank - also represented here this morning - most directly engaged in the development and implementation of PIDA.

Our hope is that our deliberations today will be rich and fruitful and that the outcome of our Symposium will provide additional, practical input into the ongoing deliberations on the shape and desired outcomes of the forthcoming TICAD V Summit.

My warm thanks to you all, once again, on behalf of the African Diplomatic Corps, for your distinguished presence here today and for being a part of our commemoration of this most important day on the African calendar.