

*2012 Africa Day Symposium
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United Nations University

“Advancing knowledge for human security, peace and development”

*Prof. Dr. Konrad Osterwalder
Rector*

Your Imperial Highness,

Your Excellency, Mr. Comberbach,

Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps,

Your Excellency, Mr. Araita Ali,

Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti and Chairperson of the 2012 Africa Day

Symposium,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues, speakers, panelists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2012 Africa Day Symposium here at the United Nations University Headquarters. As many of you know, the Africa Day Symposium is organized each year by the African Diplomatic Corps (ADC) and UNU, with the co-sponsorship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Since 2000, the annual Symposium has become an increasingly important platform for dialogue and for the promotion of innovative thinking on African issues.

Last year, the 2011 Africa Day Symposium was cancelled after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. At that time, the ADC generously donated its funding for the Symposium to the Red Cross Chapter of Japan to support communities in the Tohoku region.

We are all aware of the fact that the past year and a half has been a challenging period for Japan in many respects. But in spite of the difficult circumstances, Japan has maintained

its commitment and support for African development; in a small but symbolic way this has been illustrated by the Government's support for this Symposium.

The positive impetus that surrounds the preparation of the forthcoming TICAD V, fostered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, provides us with what is probably the most crucial signal of the Government's continuing support for African development. To illustrate this, let me quote the words of Mr. Koichiro Gemba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, at the recent "Fourth TICAD Ministerial Follow-up Meeting", held in Morocco earlier this month:

Over this past year, Japan has devoted its utmost efforts to reconstruction from the earthquake disaster. We have at the same time lived up to the solidarity extended to us from Africa by faithfully implementing the pledges Japan made in the Yokohama Action Plan in the 2008 TICAD IV.

Solidarity could well have been the theme of this year's Symposium, but the ADC and the UNU instead agreed to focus on "Hard Infrastructure Development in Africa – the Role of Japan". The importance of improved infrastructure for the support of development is well accepted, but the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) goes much further. By preparing a fully-integrated infrastructure development blueprint for the Continent, the Programme aims to stimulate regional and continental infrastructure in transport, energy, trans-boundary water and ICT.

Led by the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the New Partnership for Africa's Development - Planning and Coordination Agency, PIDA supports not just integration, but the physical connection of African countries.

Against the background of the difficult economic times, development must rest on intelligent and far-sighted investment. Without a firm base of effective infrastructure, and without serious attempts to tackle continental and regional issues, no amount of effort can ever produce lasting development. Instead, this initiative looks to the future, laying the groundwork for genuine change and growth.

But it is also true that infrastructure investment alone cannot provide sustained growth, and today's Symposium will be focused on the vital nexus of hard infrastructure, regional integration, development and the role of Japan. We should not forget, and this is certainly a perspective coming from UNU as a global university: as fundamental as

investment is, capacity development is no less important. Without the parallel support of training and knowledge transmission, continuous and sustained development cannot be achieved. The new infrastructures have to be built in partnerships by teams composed of experts from the donor countries and locals and there must be sufficiently many highly educated locals who are able to take care of maintenance and expansion of the new infrastructures.

This is why I am proud to say, that UNU has developed a new kind of partnership for education and research between the developing and the developed world by converting all its institutes into what we call Twin Institutes, that is, institutes that have two campuses, one in a developing country and one in a developed country. One of the first Twin Institutes is under construction here: it will be located in Accra, Ghana and in Tokyo.

I have every confidence that today's Symposium will address not only the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead of us, but it will bring to the fore the opportunities which exist. With strong cooperation at all levels, from the international community and actors to the absolutely critical local communities, I know that we will be able to seize those opportunities with both hands.

I look forward with great anticipation to today's presentations. The ADC and UNU have been able to assemble a truly distinguished group of keynote speakers and panelists, and I would like to thank them for their willingness to participate.

Thank you.