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**“Recent Developments in Africa and Japan’s African
Diplomacy”**

<Opening remarks>

What is the “truth” about Africa, whose image for many people is a composite of interminable political disorder, large numbers of refugees, and intractable poverty? My own view is that the 53 countries of Africa, covering a total land area of 30 million square kilometers and stretching 7400km north to south, can be classified into three regions.

First, there are the countries of North Africa, or the Maghreb, possessing a wealth of petroleum resources and constituting a single economic zone with the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Second, there are the countries of southern Africa, some of which are now in the position to aspire to self-sustained growth through trade and investment without much assistance. Third, there are the Sub-Saharan countries lying near the equator, which on the whole must be said to be in bad shape. Sub-Saharan countries account for 33 of the 49 countries termed least developed countries (LDC) and more than 70% of the individuals affected or killed by infectious diseases (AIDS and malaria) are from this region. These harsh facts provide some justification for the bleak image mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, Sub-Saharan Africa has achieved a high rate of growth averaging 5% or so since 2000, steadily forming a picture of Africa different from the “traditional” image. While in part attributable to fortunate turns of circumstance such as clear reduction in the areas suffering conflict and political instability (relative calm has been restored to most areas other than Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar) and a decline in the number of refugees from a peak of nearly 7 million down to about 2 million as peace processes move forward, this also reflects a rise in income due to the surge in prices of the region’s principal commodities of agricultural produce and mineral resources. In one sense, this points to Africa’s inherent vulnerability to natural resource availability and drops in international prices. This said, however, Africa on the whole is on a path to growth, despite the impact of the global economic slowdown, and can be regarded as having reached the stage at which sustained development built on expanded intra-regional trade and investment becomes a practical consideration. This, too, is an incontrovertible aspect of contemporary Africa.

Reflecting these circumstances, international interest continues to grow in Africa, “forgotten” for quite some time after the end of the Cold War. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), established in 1993 on Japan’s initiative, marked the beginning of this interest, and the agreement on doubling aid to Africa reached at the G8 Glen Eagles Conference in July 2005 was of great significance. Although the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) presented at the UN Millennium Summit (September 2000) are far from being met, new approaches that embrace both self-help efforts (ownership) by African countries and cooperation (partnership) by the international community continue to produce steady results. Ranking fifth among DAC countries for its ODA, Japan, too, is participating in this process.

Turning our attention to the donor countries, what characteristics do we find among them? While this might be oversimplifying matters a bit, I would say that recent years have seen the rise of efforts aimed at securing resource concessions as well as the expanding presence of emerging nations coupled with competitive relations with Western countries. There have been conspicuous moves made by Russia, which is working to reverse the substantial decline in its influence since the collapse of the Soviet Union and to secure natural resources (particularly uranium), and China, which is seeking to acquire a greater “constituency” in international organizations and to gain a secure hold on various resources (petroleum, copper, nickel) essential to its own economic growth, giving rise to a sense of caution among other donor countries. In the latter case, it is difficult to deny that China’s vigorous African diplomacy has sparked interest and involvement in Africa by the international community and that assertive investment development is contributing to Africa’s economy, but actions that are dismissive of international rules and the circumstances of partner countries (lack of consideration for compliance, governance and transparency, approaches whereby China provides infrastructure and labor across-the-board in exchange for obtaining natural resources, etc.) cannot help but cause friction with other countries. Japan should urge China to take steps to correct this at the government level.

In comparison to this impressive “boom” of activity by China, Japan’s African diplomacy at a glance – the number of embassies established, the scale of summit-level diplomacy, the number of Japanese nationals resident in those countries, etc. – cannot help but appear very subdued. However, a closer look reveals that Japan’s stance is characterized by consistency and a long-term perspective. For example, Japan suggested doubling ODA and private investment in Africa by 2012 at the 4th TICAD (held every five years) in May 2008, and an action plan was adopted that included this proposal as well as infrastructure improvement, agriculture, trade and investment, community development, education, medical care and climate change measures. In the annual follow-up meetings that supplement this Conference, Japan has frequently declared that these guidelines will not be swayed by changes in its domestic political environment. Japan has also been conducting more substantial African diplomacy, such as ascertaining the wishes of African countries and reflecting these in discussions conducted at the G8 (L’Aquila, August 2009) and G20

(London, April 2009) meetings, earning the appreciation of participating African countries. However, the lack of interest within Japan vis-à-vis these efforts is a problem, and I would like to see the public better informed not only that diplomacy towards Africa contributes to the stability of the international community as a whole but also that these efforts strengthen Japan's diplomatic infrastructure and generate two-way economic benefits.

If I were to draw conclusions from the above, I would say that Africa possesses both potential (plentiful resources and market values) and vulnerabilities (the dangers of conflict, infectious diseases, low educational levels, instability over generational changes in leadership), and that it is headed for an important turning point in realizing stable growth. Collaborative efforts are needed to provide an efficient "push" forward and, though in a seemingly circuitous manner, these will ultimately come back around to Japan's benefit.

<Separate explanations>

(Botswana)

— Although a small country with a population of only about two million, Botswana has been termed "a model student of good governance"; it enjoys stable domestic political conditions and has effectively invested the income from its key commodity diamonds into infrastructure and education. The country also has plentiful livestock and tourism resources and, as evidenced by the choice of Botswana's capital Gaborone for the headquarters of the 15-member Southern African Development Community (SADC), it continues to build a foothold as a regional hub.

(Development strategy being pursued by Botswana and SADC)

— Given the high level of education and the ready availability of human resources on the one hand and the small size of its population on the other, Botswana has put together a national strategy of forming a financial and logistics center by completing a customs union within SADC and expanding its infrastructure (airport, transportation, communication facilities). As awareness of the political and economic benefits through regional integration grows among national leaders – albeit very slowly – moves toward integration within SADC are likely to pick up speed.

(Vision of an African development and growth model for the future)

— In addition to the sale of natural resources, attempts are being pursued to foster investment, trade and knowledge-intensive industries (especially in southern Africa). Such business models will generate benefits for both Japan and Africa as middle-ware development and added-value creation utilizing the advantages of Japan-standard terrestrial digital television broadcasting (affinity with portable devices, few restrictions due to royalties).

(Issues in Japan's African diplomacy)

— Bearing in mind the blunt resource diplomacy being conducted by China, Russia and others, the issues facing Japan's ODA center on enhancing ODA's "visibility" by substantially shortening the time between planning and implementation and converting to larger-scale/grants projects that enable technology transfer and human resources development.