

Opening Remarks by the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Seiko Hashimoto at the Fifth Africa-Asia Business Forum (AABF V)

(June 15, 2009 Kampala)

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Guests from Africa and Asia, both from the government and private sector,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today at the Fifth Africa-Asia Business Forum (AABF V) held in Kampala of the Republic of Uganda on the theme of tourism promotion. Known as the "Pearl of Africa," Uganda is endowed with beautiful nature and is home to mountain gorillas, chimpanzees and other rare animals. While this is only my first visit to Uganda, it seems to me that this is an entirely appropriate place to be discussing tourism. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the host country Uganda for providing this wonderful facility by Lake Victoria, and I would also like to share a few words on behalf of the co-organizers.

Just a year ago, Japan announced various initiatives, including doubling Japan's official development assistance (ODA) for Africa and providing support for doubling private investment to Africa by 2012 at the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV). Since then, Japan has been steadily engaging in efforts to faithfully fulfill these commitments. Regarding the issue of the ongoing global financial and economic crisis which was not expected a year ago, responses were discussed at the TICAD Ministerial Follow-up Meeting held in Botswana last March, and Prime Minister Taro Aso called attention to the importance of enhancing assistance toward Africa at the London Summit (Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy) in April. Japan has been thus respecting above all the voices of Africa while implementing TICAD IV commitments.

The significance of tourism promotion, the theme of this forum, has been emphasized in the "Boosting Economic Growth" pillar of the Yokohama Action Plan, one of the outcome documents of TICAD IV. As tourism is where significant development is anticipated for Africa, I believe it must be promoted as a priority area in order to overcome the impacts of the financial and economic crises we now face.

The FIFA World Cup is scheduled to be held in the Republic of South Africa next year. The Japanese team qualified for the event with its victory against Uzbekistan this month. This World Cup shall serve as a great opportunity to draw global attention to tourism in Africa. As such, the Japanese tourism industry too is starting to engage in a real effort to promote tourism in Africa. I believe that it is extremely timely

for this forum to focus on tourism at this juncture and I would be delighted if all those involved around the table utilize this opportunity to the fullest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Said to be the birthplace of mankind, Africa is full of nature, various animals and plants, and traditional culture. As for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites, 114 out of the entire 878 sites are situated in Africa. Upon visiting the Republic of Rwanda as part of the reconnaissance mission prior to this forum, I was deeply moved not only by the beauty of its abundant nature but also by the symbiotic relationship of the people engaged in development efforts with their surrounding nature, affirming the great potential of tourism in Africa. On the other hand, it is also true that there are still many aspects for which Africa's latent potential may not be fully tapped.

The Africa-Asia Business Forum which was established as a result of TICAD II has been held four times thus far. A good number of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been concluded between the private sector companies both from Africa and Asia of various fields, and contributed greatly to forming "private sector"-to-"private sector" partnerships. On the occasion of this fifth forum, in contrast to those to date, with the special focus on tourism and the participation of ministers and government officials, we will engage in policy dialogue to develop and promote sustainable tourism through the public and private sectors working hand-in-hand.

For the next day and a half, we will discuss among other topics, the challenges and opportunities now faced by the tourism industry in Africa; what are and how to develop tourism products that meet the needs of tourists from Asia; how can the government aptly incorporate the needs of the private sector, place them within their development strategy and link them with the assistance measures made available by the donors; and how to bring about poverty reduction and growth through tourism while maintaining and preserving natural and cultural heritages that are indispensable assets to Africa. I hope that this forum will serve as an opportunity to learn from the previous success stories, deepen our knowledge on available financial and capacity building facilities, and help find a way for even more effective private-public partnership.

As for the development of the tourism sector, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) may consider providing cooperation in areas such as master plan development, functional and capacity enhancement of tourism administration, establishment of tourism related systems, community-

participatory development for sustainable tourism, and enhancement of tourism marketing and promotion capacities. Furthermore, the improvement of local products through the "One Village One Product" movement by JICA and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) is an important project leading to the development of local industries and tourism promotion. The TICAD co-organizers, namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, as well as co-organizations of this forum, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and others, also have various assistance menus on tourism promotion. In addition, underdevelopment of the basic infrastructures, such as water, sanitation, electricity and roads, which are pointed out to be most common constraints for tourism, may be resolved within the context of the development strategy. At the TICAD Ministerial Follow-up Meeting held in Botswana in March, Japan announced its intention to provide at the earliest date possible two billion dollars in the form of grant aid and technical cooperation, and is currently intensively formulating projects. I would like to encourage African countries to make effective use of the various facilities made available at TICAD IV to successfully promote tourism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Safety and sanitation are the two factors that the tourists attach great importance in general. All stakeholders should give utmost attention to these aspects. On the other hand, Africa still remains a distant land to many people in Asia. In some cases the negative image caused by lack of information and knowledge, such as unstable security and prevailing of diseases, may prejudice them against Africa. Therefore, there is a need to publicize the real situation of Africa, including diverse and wonderful tourism attractions and vibrant growth in recent years. I believe greater effort should be put into image improvement strategies and equipping all stakeholders with better knowledge about Africa. In Japan, various public relations programs on Africa are being implemented, such as the African Festa which introduces the music, culture, fashion, dance and other aspects of Africa to citizens, the Visit World Campaign which advertises tourist attractions abroad, and the World Travel Fair. There is still a further need to intensify efforts that include increasing media coverage on attractive Africa.

I hope that through this forum starting today, active debate will take place so that the mutual cooperative relations between Africa and Asia will be enhanced in the area of tourism. I wish from the very bottom of my heart that this will yield the result of increasing the number of people visiting Africa to experience its charms and vitality. I will close my remarks by wishing for the success of this forum. Thank you very much.