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Opening Remarks by Mr. Yoshiro Mori, Chairperson of TICAD III
(Provisional Translation)

29 September 2003

Tokyo

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Yoshiro Mori and will be serving as the Chairperson for the conference.

On behalf of the co-organizers, the United Nations, the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA), the World Bank and the Government of Japan, I hereby declare the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD III), held in the 10th anniversary year of the TICAD process, open.

Allow me to make some remarks at the opening of the conference.

Today, we have the honor to welcome [23] Heads of State and Government from African countries. This is the very first time in Japan's history for such a number of African leaders to be gathered here. At the same time, TICAD III, attended by more than 1,000 participants from [89] countries and [47] international and regional organizations is an international conference of unprecedented scale in the history of Japanese diplomacy. This signifies the extent of interest and expectations of the international community on TICAD, which encourages the co-organizers as well as underlines the gravity of the mission.

As the Chairperson for the conference I will expend maximum efforts over the course of the next three days to see to it that there will be a frank exchange of opinions concerning African development and seek a new direction for African development based on the will and wisdom of Africa.

As I recall, in 2000 on the night prior to the G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit, the other G8 leaders agreed to my appeal as Chair, and for the first time in G8 Summit history dialogue between G8 leaders and leaders of developing nations was held. With this turning point, the trends in the international community concerning cooperation to Africa have broken new ground. At the G8 Kananaskis Summit in 2002, the "G8 Africa Action Plan" was adopted as a framework for supporting the objectives of the "New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)," and at the Evian Summit this year too, African issues were discussed as an important agenda item.

At the beginning of the 21st century I made the first ever official visit to Africa as an incumbent Japanese Prime Minister. Although my visit was a short one, I was able to see and feel for myself the potential inherent in Africa, including rich resources and incredibly vigorous human talent, and also the strife caused by poverty, AIDS and conflict. The problems confronting Africa are problems that threaten human existence itself. We must establish a "human security" that will release all people from such threats. In other words, I have renewed my determination that by Africa fully achieving its potential and overcoming its difficulties, we must make a 21st century that will shine brightly for the people of the world.

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In response to a call I made at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, the Commission on Human Security was established. One of the co-chairs is Ms. Sadako Ogata, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, who was with me on my visit to Africa. "Human Security" today is one of the key visions of Japanese diplomacy, and it provides a new perspective to the TICAD process.

On a personal note, and given my special feelings towards Africa, in July this year I took the initiative in establishing a Japan-African Union Parliamentary Friendship League comprising some 80 parliamentarians, to express a welcome to and place expectations upon the establishment of the African Union (AU). And today I have the honor of assuming the important role of chairing TICAD III.

I would like to make a point from the perspective of facilitating the proceedings of this conference. It is important that valuable discussions are summarized at this conference in order to provide a source of reference in the future. In my capacity as Chairperson, I will undertake to see to it that the main points of discussion that are covered in each session will be sufficiently synthesized into a Chair's Summary that I will be finalizing at my discretion as the Chairperson and report at the closing session of the conference.

With these remarks, I would now like to hand the floor to Prime Minister of Japan Junichiro Koizumi to deliver his Keynote Speech.