

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am Yumiko Noda, Deputy Mayor of Yokohama City. It is our greatest honor to welcome all the distinguished experts on climate change and forestry to the city of Yokohama. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the Honorable Mr. Emmanuel Ze Meka, Executive Director of ITTO, for holding this highly important conference in Yokohama.

As many of you may know, the city will be hosting the fourth international conference on African Development, which takes place between 28th and 30th of May. It is the first time that TICAD is held outside of Tokyo. We are extremely honored and excited to be able to host this event, and we have been thinking through what we, as a city, could do to help the TICAD IV a great success and how we could contribute to Africa.

One conclusion— Whilst we won't be able make a **huge** contribution, we still can make a meaningful one, by leveraging the power of our citizens. We are the largest city in Japan, except Tokyo, with the population of 3.6 millions. Because of the geographical distance between Yokohama and Africa, we do not know exactly about what is going there. I believe this is the biggest challenge. The biggest problem in my view is “indifference”. And “indifference” leads to “non-action”. We human beings do not take action towards something we are indifferent. TICAD IV presents us a big opportunity in which 3.6 million people get to know what is happening in Africa and how their vibrant future could be affected by the ongoing climate change. “Interest” often espouses “sympathy”, and in some instances, it may lead to actual “action”. We believe that makes a small, yet meaningful contribution.

As such, the city has been taking the initiative for raising awareness among citizens toward Africa. Last Saturday, we started the African Month, during which period, there will be many events for us to learn Africa, think of Africa, and enjoy Africa. In

addition to events like symposiums, seminars, photo exhibitions, film festivals, and concerts, we have been carrying out exchange sessions between African embassies and our city schools under One School One Country Project. School children of each participating school are studying about one country in Africa on their own as well as through discussions with ambassadors and other embassy members.

Tomorrow, another project will start, i.e., One Station One Country Project. All the stations of our subway network will be converted into African countries. Each station will be decorated with flags and pictures of the designated African country. Information on the country will be displayed along with the messages from our school children which are effectively the output of One School One Country Project. We do hope that subway passengers who are not necessarily interested in Africa will get to know the continent, as they happen to walk through the station.

I am extremely pleased that today's conference is held as part of our African Month program. I am especially thankful for Mr. Ze Meka for making today's session open to our citizens. It is truly a precious opportunity for us to listen to the international experts on the issues of climate change. If we become better aware of how the climate change could affect the people in Africa, we may reflect upon our lifestyle and try to make it more environment-friendly.

The citizens of Yokohama City have already demonstrated the amazing ability and power in relation to environmental issues.

A huge metropolis like us is the symbol of today's human civilization. Here we enjoy most convenient and most comfortable lifestyle, and as a consequence, we create our own problems. One of the problems peculiar to urban cities is household waste. We become used to buying and throwing away things. In 2001, we set up a target of 30% reduction of the general waste until 2010, aiming at a recycling-based society. I am extremely proud that we achieved the target in 2005, five year ahead. Last year, the total waste volume was 38.6% less than what we had in 2001.

Besides waste reduction efforts, we are working together with our citizens for creating greener and better environment. In the past, as we rapidly grew to become the largest city in Japan after Tokyo, we have lost significant amount of our trees to cover only 31% of our land. We are now making every effort to maintain and restore our green environment. Currently we are in the midst of carrying out the project of planting 1.5 million new trees until next year when we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the opening of our port. Furthermore, our citizens have actively participated in the volunteer activities for preserving the forest for purpose of maintaining high quality of our drinking water.

In January this year, we embarked on another challenge. We introduced the target of reducing the greenhouse gas per citizen by 30% by 2025. I am quite confident that we will be able to successfully meet this new challenge, given what we had already achieved under the waste reduction initiative.

Our efforts are still ongoing. And we are sure that our efforts are too small from the earth-scale perspective. We may not be able to be a vital force for fighting against the crucial climate change. But we are still hopeful. It is us who created today's civilization. The problems which we created can be or should be fixed by us. It is our potential to fix the problems. At least, it is our right to take up the challenges of tackling with the problems. And most importantly it is our obligation to do so. Our 3.6 million citizens in Yokohama have demonstrated the potential through our past waste-reducing actions. I believe it is time for us to aim higher, and join the efforts of making contribution in a global scale.

I, together with our fellow citizens, very much look forward to listening to the expert discussions today.

Thank you.

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