

September 2, 2014
OKIMOTO Yasushige

Honorable guests, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to participate in the CAREC National Consultation Workshop.

As you are aware, the international situation is undergoing significant changes. With the aim of realizing a free, prosperous and stable international community, Japan provides assistance directly and through international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank to countries that share similar fundamental values and interests. As globalization keeps on accelerating today, threats to mankind are becoming more diverse and serious. Those threats include the internationalization of domestic conflicts, terrorism, spread of infectious diseases, human trafficking and refugee issues accompanying the expansion of migration, economic crises, spread of poverty, worsening social disparity, climate change, environmental issues, natural disasters, and so on. In order to address these outstanding global issues we need to strengthen cooperation with the international community based on human security as a guiding principle, toward the shared goals of achieving the Millennium Development Goals: MDGs), transition to green economy, and realization of sustainable development. In order to contribute to the solution of these global issues, Japan must consolidate all of its efforts. In the field of assistance, a greater variety of actors outside the government are now involved in the provision of assistance. These include local municipalities, NGOs, private companies and universities, and the Government has been striving to strengthen cooperation with these actors.

As for the Central Asia, the countries in this region which have abundant natural resources such as oil and natural gas, are situated in a geopolitically strategic location that bridges Asia, Europe, Russia and the Middle East. Taking into account the importance of this region in the context of efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and addressing crucial issues in the international community such as preventing the spread of terrorism, illicit drugs, and illegal armaments, Japan has been advancing initiatives to further strengthen the relationship with those countries through frequent visits of key officials and foreign ministers' meetings within the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue which started in 2004. Recently on July 16 in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyz, the Fifth Foreign Ministers' Meeting was attended by foreign ministers from all the member countries. In the past 10 years, Japan joined the dialogue for regional cooperation in specific fields based on the idea that regional cooperation is necessary for stability and development of Central Asia. In this

meeting, on the basis of this concept, the participants confirmed direction of the “Central Asia plus Japan” dialogue as a vision for “the next 10 years” that it will serve as a field for enhancing practical cooperation. As a result of the foreign ministers’ meeting, the participants summarized 10 years of the “Central Asia plus Japan” dialogue, and signed the “Joint Statement” which includes a wide range of contents such as progress in regional cooperation in specific fields, importance of peaceful solution of conflict and cooperation in an international arena such as disarmament and non-proliferation. The participants also adopted the “Roadmap” which indicated directions of cooperation and specific examples in the field of agriculture.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In addition to bilateral cooperation with each country, Japan provides assistance through projects of international organizations such as CAREC Program of ADB funded by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR). As we all know, the Fund was founded by the Government of Japan in May 2000 and it aims directly at poverty reduction, and provides innovative and demonstrable impacts on poverty reduction. There are different schemes of activity under the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction. The scope and thematic focus of projects are varied but one thing is common: all of the projects work with the poorest and most vulnerable communities and households with the objective of improving their social and economic conditions. In frames of the projects lots of areas were covered and different spheres: agriculture and natural resources, education, energy, finance, health and social protection, industry and trade, water supply and other municipal infrastructure and services, transport and ICT.

I will set you some examples of that aid:

- 1 The Japan Fund built up capacities for self-governance of water management associations and helped them to set up livelihood activities, such as fish culture, animal and poultry raising, and small trading;
- 2 Schools rehabilitation, provision of additional classrooms and equipment, such as desks, chairs, boards;
- 3 The rehabilitation of tsunami-affected local roads, the project restored road drainage system, meanwhile creating opportunities for the tsunami victims, people who lost everything except their lives to earn. The survey has shown people were happy, compared to the several organizations assistance, this project has been more effective as it provided an opportunity for us to work and earn a monthly income for a period of time.
- 4 Improvement of rural roads, gave the poor villages better access to schools, clinics, markets, and bringing harvests for sale to markets improve their living standards.

Let me give an example of the project in Tajikistan funded by the JFPR. The project called “Community-Based Rural Road Maintenance (Tajikistan)” was aimed at reducing rural poverty and raising the living standards of rural communities by increasing their access to basic social, economic, and income-generating activities. Mr. A. Sharipov, Chairperson of Qalai Surkh Jamoat, said “the rural roads of villages (Nigoba, Oluchahako, Chugdakbiyon, Shulhob,and Host) were repaired and, over a period of 3 years, about 70–80 villagers were provided work and have now improved their living standard...This project did a lot to help vulnerable people...After the repair of rural roads, movement between villages is improved. The villagers can easily go to the district and jamoat (commune) centers, bring their produce for sale to markets, and improve their living standards.”

Ladies and gentlemen,

As for Turkmenistan, I am also very pleased to say that in December last year the Asia Development Bank approved the projects of the Regional Technical Assistance(RETa) for the equivalent 4,000,000 (four million USD) to be financed as grants by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction. like: Coordinated Border Management, Facilitation of Regional Transit and Trade, as well as Aligning Customs Trade Facilitation Measures with Best Practices in Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation . And ADB serves as the Executing Agency. Since establishment of the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction more than 130 different projects have been implemented across Asia and the Pacific. I would like to underline that Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction is a tool for local communities and civil society organizations including NGOs, to actively participate in the development process and submit applications to ADB offices.

I, as a representative of the Government of Japan, assure you that Japan will continue to support to ADB by JFPR and thus contribute to fighting poverty in Asia.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deep gratitude to you for inviting me to today’s workshop and wish you all success in your further activities.

Thank you very much.