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PRESS CONFERENCE BY JAPAN

At a press conference Thursday sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Japan, the Deputy Director of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, Seigi Hinata, informed correspondents that Japan, the United Nations and the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) had decided to hold the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) in late 1998.

The following representatives of the other co-organizers of the Tokyo Conference also took part in the press conference: the Executive Secretary of the GCA, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah; the Special Coordinator of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries (OSCAL) in the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Makha D. Sarr; and the Chief Economist in the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), John Ohiorhenuan.

Speaking of the decision to hold the Second Conference next year, Mr. Hinata said TICAD II would build on the progress made at TICAD I, held in October 1993 in Tokyo. The 1993 Conference had succeeded in many ways by, for example, drawing about 1,000 participants from 48 African countries, 13 major donor nations and 10 international organizations. More than 45 countries and non-governmental organizations also attended as observers. The Conference was held against a background of a perceived decline in the international community's interest in African affairs and the so-called marginalization felt by the region's countries, which were facing deep crises in the 1980s and 1990s. The Conference also identified some of the priority areas in development that the participating countries and organizations should tackle.

An outcome of TICAD I, he continued, was the adoption of the Tokyo Declaration on African Development, which was an important document that broadly identified the areas which required further efforts to advance African development. The areas included: political and economic reforms; private sector contributions to economic development; regional cooperation and integration; emergency relief and development; the Asian experience and African development; and international cooperation. In adopting that Declaration, TICAD I participants also agreed to hold another conference before the new millennium. Three years after TICAD I, Japan was now offering to host the Conference in 1998 and its preparatory meetings in 1997.

The Deputy Director said TICAD II would have the same framework as its prequel. It would also have three co-organizers: the Japanese Government; the GCA; and the United Nations -- OSCAL and UNDP. The International Monetary

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Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other organizations would co-sponsor it. The preparatory meeting for the Conference would be held in Tokyo and was provisionally scheduled for 10 and 11 November. Asian nations would be asked to join their African counterparts and international organizations in the meetings. The preparatory process would review the progress made since the 1993 Tokyo Declaration, select the main development themes for the agenda of action and discuss the framework and organization of TICAD II, which would not be a pledging conference.

The review process at the preparatory meeting would also identify the priorities on which efforts would be focused, he said. Efforts would be made to ensure that the meetings lead to action-oriented and concrete programmes to help African development move towards the twenty-first century. During the preparatory process, the co-organizers would cooperate with their African colleagues, meet in Africa and seek Asian, European and North American participation.

In a subsequent question-and-answer session, Mr. Hinata was asked to explain the progress that had been made since TICAD I. In response, he said progress had been made in various areas. For example, seminars and workshops had been held to follow up on some Tokyo Declaration decisions and deepen the understanding of African issues. Seminars and symposia were held on democratization, peace and development and the problems of conflict in Africa. Three forums were also held on the cooperation between Asia and Africa, with the first held in Indonesia in December 1994. The forums had led to agreements by the two continents to work together to advance concrete projects in areas of common interest. The second Asia-Africa forum would be held in the next few months.

Meanwhile, he continued, two regional workshops had been held in Africa. The first, the Eastern-Southern Africa Regional Workshop, was held in Zimbabwe in July 1995, while the second, the Western-Central Africa Regional Workshop, was held last July in Côte d'Ivoire. The last workshop had identified seven priority areas in which to seek African inputs and identified Asian policies that might be useful to Africa. Those included Malaysia's policy of integrating diverse ethnic groups and promoting equitable development and Indonesia's policy of unity through diversity and consensus decision-making for nation building. Those exercises had brought about increased contributions to African development from Europe and North America.

Asked about the involvement of the GCA in TICAD, Ambassador Ould-Abdallah said the GCA -- an intergovernmental organization where African political and economic issues were discussed -- was also a co-organizer of the Tokyo Conference. It also had several mechanisms for discussing African issues -- the Economic and Political Committees and its annual Forum. The Economic Committee will meet this year in Abidjan -- before the annual conference of the African Development Bank -- to discuss trade. The Political Committee will address the transition from military to civilian rule and the role and

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funding of political parties. The annual Forum, due in Mozambique in October, would address corruption, which was related to the main agenda of TICAD.

In response to a question, Mr. Hinata said that, yes, one of TICAD's goals was to increase cooperation between Asia and Africa. The Conferences would strengthen cooperation because Asian economic experiences were relevant to many African countries, a theme that had been repeatedly expressed in the TICAD process since 1993. Similarly, such regional organizations as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) would also enhance their networks and share experiences.

As for the part played in Asian-African cooperation by the UNDP, the Chief Economist in its Bureau for Africa, John Ohiorhenuan, said the Programme had a unit on technical cooperation among developing countries, which worked to foster the exchange of experiences and the transfer of technologies that were more relevant than their "northern" counterparts. While those efforts preceded TICAD I, the Conference had enabled the UNDP to broaden the input of Asian experience into Africa's development. The exchanges were made through regional workshops on development and cooperation between various countries, he said.

Asked whether TICAD II organizers would involve subregional groups such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in their preparations, Mr. Hinata said, "Yes, we need to consult with subregional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and various other forums in West and East Africa."

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