Opening Statement by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

Yasuhisa Shiozaki

Symposium on Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize

August 26, 2016

Ivory Room, Nairobi Hilton Hotel

Nairobi, Republic of Kenya

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, colleagues in global health community, ladies and gentlemen, Jambo, Ohayou Gozaimasu, Bon Jour, Good Morning!

It is my greatest pleasure to be here with you, at this precious occasion of the Symposium on the Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize, and also is my deepest honour to add a few words following the message from Dr. Cleopa Mailu, Cabinet Secretary for Health of Republic of Kenya.

As we are all aware, Dr. Noguchi devoted himself in the fight against the yellow fever and sacrificed his life finally in Accra, Ghana nearly a century ago. His spirit has been still vividly alive, succeeded by followers who have been contributing to promotion of African health.

The Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize aims to honour individuals with outstanding achievements on medical research and medical services in Africa, thereby encourages and empowers those who are tackling health challenges in this continent.

The Prize was given birth in 2006 by Mr. Koizumi, then Prime Minister of Japan. Inspired by Dr Noguchi’s devotion to health needs of Africa, and being convinced that human resources for health is the key to the future of Africa, Mr. Koizumi created the Prize. Today, we are here with the distinguished laureates of the Prize, awarded in 2008 at the TICAD IV and in 2013 at the TICAD V for their prominent dedications to the health in this continent:

- Professor Miriam Were of Kenya, for her devotion to the community health care and advocacy for vulnerable population affected by HIV/AIDS;

- Dr. Alex Godwin Coutinho of Uganda, for his sincere treatment, advocacy, and creation of prevention/care/treatment model for HIV/AIDS patients;

- Dr. Brian Greenwood of the United Kingdom, for his innovative research notably on malaria, leading to an effective strategy to control the disease.

And Professor Peter Piot of Belgium, unfortunately not here today, but his achievement is, as you all know, incomparable specifically in HIV and Ebola.

The global community is now advancing towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Positive health related achievements have been observed in Africa, in the maternal and child health as well as in the HIV/ AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis issues.

However, Africa is still faced with health challenges including public health emergency like an Ebola outbreak. This Region accounts for the highest maternal mortality and for more than half of all cases of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

To tackle the health challenges, critically needed are the health care workers and aid personnel who devote themselves to the health services in the field, as well as medical researchers who explore the pathogenic and epidemiological study focusing on Africa, which usually attract little attention. They are the very target of the Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize and their empowerment is exactly what Mr. Koizumi aimed for.

In all development agenda, human resource is the key to success. Japanese policy on the development assistance has been always on this conviction. I hope the Prize contributes to encourage key professionals who work tirelessly for health in Africa.

Today, I look forward to proactive discussions among distinguished panellists and participants, in particular, African health leaders, workers and researchers. I hope you will find this session extremely relevant to shape the unclouded visions for the healthier future in the Continent.

Japan, as your long standing partner and friend, is committed to support such luminous visions.

Thank you.