

# PRESS RELEASE

21 March 2008 Morning



## Africa and Japan Civil Society challenges the Draft Yokohama Declaration and the Draft Action Plan at TICAD Ministerial Conference in Gabon

**Libreville, Gabon** –African and Japanese Civil Society invited to the Ministerial Conference of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development IV (TICAD IV)<sup>1</sup> acknowledged the efforts to date by African and Japanese government counterparts in working towards a cooperation framework in the interests of the development of the continent and the people of Africa. Civil society delegates also recognise the efforts of the Japanese Government to facilitate the participation of civil society actors in the Conference and in the processes preceding the Conference.

Nevertheless, Civil Society has observed certain critical gaps in the, the draft of the Yokohama Declaration and the corresponding Action Plan (outcomes of the Conference), and thus see an opportunity to engage for their improvement in

- TICAD should use the impact on the people that it intends to support as an indicator of success. An impact-oriented strategy will emphasise on harmonising, localising, and operationalising the multiple conventions and policies to which the African Governments have already committed.
- Vulnerability of women, children, differently abled people, people living with / affected by infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other marginalized population should be emphasized. Corresponding positions for addressing their adverse situation should be highlighted throughout the Declaration and Action Plan.

The Japanese Government has identified 4 thematic areas for future collaboration with Africa (economic growth, Millennium Development Goals, peace consolidation, and environment / climate change). The Civil Society finds the sections on the situation analysis and the commitment toward achieving MDGs particularly weak. Mr. Gusutave Assah of Civic Commission for Africa (C-CfA) says, "Achieving the MDGs is prerequisite for economic growth. Unless we have healthy, educated pool of population, we cannot expect a healthy, equitable, and sustainable economic growth." There are on-going initiatives that the African Governments have introduced in the areas of health, education and community development. Yet not all the initiatives are necessarily making positive impacts at the grassroots level. While the present draft of Yokohama Declaration recognises these efforts, the Action Plan does not give any proposal how TICAD IV could practically support these efforts.

Other areas of concern include the perceived shift of Japanese ODA towards loans from untied grants, complete omission of the word "democracy" from the draft, and dangerously simplified perception of peace. "We do not consider the absence of violence as peace," Ms. Rose Wanjuru of GCAP Kenya says. "Recent cases of some African countries show that social injustices make society fragile and unstable even during periods of perceived economic growth.

As the Civil Society only had the observer status in the Ministerial Conference, the speech given by Mr. Assah at the plenary session today was the only official opportunity to voice these concerns.

Lobbying the Japanese and African Governments, and the co-organisers will continue between now and the TICAD proper in May by the network of Japanese and African NGOs (TNnet)<sup>2</sup> to improve the Yokohama Declaration and Action Plan.

---

### Note to editors:

<sup>1</sup> TICAD IV will be held in Yokohama, Japan between May 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008. For more information on TICAD, please visit UNDP website <http://www.undp.org/ticad2/index.shtml> Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> TNnet was established in March 2007 with an aim to enhance information sharing and communication among Japanese NGOs for the TICAD IV. There are 35 Japanese NGOs related to Africa in our member list.

**Contact: Secretariat of TICAD IV-NGO Network (TNnet): TICAD Civil Society Forum (TCSF)**

c/o Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Rm 613-6, 7F Sodainishiwaseda Bldg. Nishiwaseda Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0051 Japan Tel&Fax : + 81 – (0) 3-5286-8261 e-mail: [office@ticad-csf.net](mailto:office@ticad-csf.net) URL: [www.ticad-csf.net](http://www.ticad-csf.net)