



Press Release
May 29th, 2008

The first ever Civil Society Session in TICAD



= Calling on “People’s TICAD” and the Civil Society Participation =

In the 15-year history of TICAD, the civil society has always fought for its space as a legitimate development actor in the process. The situation did not improve drastically for the on-going TICAD IV: The civil society is participating in this 5-year cyclic event as an observer with limited access to the main conference hall. There was one small progress, however, this time: The civil society session was adopted as an official program – not side event.

The civil society session gathered 160 people from Africa, Japanese and international civil society organizations, Japanese Government, TICAD co-organizers such as the World Bank, UNDP, the world famous singer and advocate for Africa, Bono, and the Roll-back Malaria Good Will Ambassador, Yvonne Chakachaka. The lively discussion was broadcasted live in the internet.

The biggest disparagement raised by the African civil society was the heavy inclination of TICAD IV to the acceleration of the macro economic growth. The superficial, macro economic growth disguises the aggravating poverty and social inequity. The draft output of TICAD IV as they are now, they criticized, does not take into consideration these negative social impacts of economic growth. The participants explored the issue of social inequity by touching upon the recent social disturbances in many African countries resulting from the food price increase. These events were triggered by the acute increase of prices for sure, but the underlying cause is the persisting social divide between the rich and the poor within the African societies. An urgent action was called on to redistribute the

gain of the macro economic growth. The practical, concrete actions are needed to support the small farmers and the people who are engaged in the informal sectors.

TICAD IV is taking place in the midst of global discussion about the impending impact of the climate change to the African people. The mid term review revealed that the achievement of the MDGs by African countries is almost impossible. Is TICAD process in general and Japanese's aid policy for Africa in specific addressing these fundamental issues? Not sure: If not, then for whom, and for what TICAD is meant to be?

The participants from the African civil society were very candid. TICAD IV seems to put much effort to make and keep African Governments happy. It does not, however, seem to care listening to the ordinary African people, and especially most marginalized people who may not necessarily be represented by the Government. They are the drivers of the African Development, and therefore should be in the centre of the TICAD process. The civil society wants TICAD to be owned by the African people, and it is possible. For that to happen, TICAD should recognize that it is no longer only the government that functions in the interest of people.

“Dynamic social movements happen when there is a dynamic individual or group of individuals,” said Bono. These movements are often backed by the true voices that come from within. “(Therefore) we cannot not to consult the Civil Society because they bring these voices of the people to the policy discussion and deliver the commitment to the people” followed Mr. Hartwig Schafer of the World Bank. “African Civil Society must regain its volunteer corps that contributes to the development of their own communities and enhance solidarity,” further added Mr. Thierno Kane of UNDP. All comments reconfirm the opening speech by H.E. Mr. Yasushi Kurokochi, the Chair of TICAD I: The achievement of vibrant Africa depends on the vibrant people and vibrant civil society.

“The paradigm shift in the African development started when G8 including Japan committed for the debt relieve. Now we need to make them keep their words,” added Bono.

Government of course represents its people – if it is legitimately elected and trusted by the public. Otherwise, the role of the civil society becomes even more important. It is imperative for the civil society to engage in the whole process of TICAD – from selection of the agenda, to drafting the output documents to implementation to monitoring. The comment from Mr. Hiroki of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was encouraging. “Japanese Government honors its promise,” he said. “One promise that we make here is that we would work closely with the Civil Society: both African and Japanese.”

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***** NGO Press Conference right after TICAD IV *****

Date and Time: May 30th, 2008(Fri), PM3:00~4:00

(Language: English *Japanese and French questions will be interpreted consecutively)

Venue: Conference Room, Foreign Press Center, Japan(FPCJ) 6F

Nippon Press Center Building, 2-2-1, Uchisaiwaicho, Chiyoda-ku

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