

## **Opening speech by Prime Minister Naoto Kan**

16:00 Friday, September 3, 2010

Asahi Hall, Yurakucho Mullion, Tokyo

*\*\*Unofficial Translation by JCIE\*\**

In 1996 when I was handling the issue of HIV-tainted blood products as minister of health, many people were dying of AIDS, whether infected by tainted blood products or through other channels. People I would meet at one meeting would either have died or have been on the verge of dying by the time the next meeting would be held. During my term as minister of health, a settlement was reached that the Japanese government had to take responsibility for those who were infected through tainted blood products. But even after this agreement, I was still worried about whether those infected with HIV would be able to live healthy lives. At that time, however, there were wonderful new drugs being developed one after the other. And, that is when we started to see a dramatic reduction in the number of people dying of AIDS as well as people returning to an active life.

I just had the opportunity to walk through the exhibit and see that people from many regions—Africa, Asia, Latin America—still lose their lives to AIDS, but at the same time I could see how much the situation has improved. I saw mothers who have passed the infection on to their newborn babies. But, on the other hand, I also learned that if expectant mothers start treatment right away, they can virtually avoid transferring the virus to their babies.

Ideally, we need to eliminate AIDS entirely, but since this cannot be done all at once, then at least we need a global mechanism for ensuring that people are able to access this treatment. It was with this goal in mind that the Global Fund was created. The idea was introduced at the Kyushu-Okinawa G8 Summit, so Japan can be seen as one of the founding fathers of the fund, to which we have committed close to US\$1.3 billion. It is said that this fund has saved close to 6 million lives. On the nongovernmental side, Japanese NGOs and companies have also played an important role in this fight pursued by the Global Fund—such as the NGO Daddy Long Legs Uganda, and companies like Sumitomo Chemical and Takeda Pharmaceutical. And I would like to express my thanks and respect to everyone who has been a part of that.

The Millennium Development Goals will be a major theme of the UN MDG Summit to be held at the end of September. The Global Fund plays an important role in fighting against the three major communicable diseases, which are a target of one of these important goals. And the Japanese government has been approached from diverse partners about its level of commitment at the coming third replenishment round. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we will need to be more proactive and renew our commitment. As Japan's prime minister, I am making preparations to go to the UN at the end of September, where I will talk about what Japan will do to support these goals.

We have not completely rid the world of military conflict. As many people die from disease and poverty as die from military conflict. In that context, countries that have money should share it with others in the international community. Countries that have people who can help should send them to help. Countries with the technology should share their technology. The biggest task now for the world is for people to help people, which is the real meaning of creating a network of human security. I am happy to have had the opportunity to see this photo exhibit today and to reflect on my time as minister of health. This photo exhibition has given me the chance to share with all of you my commitment to doing my best in providing greater support to the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to the activities of the Global Fund.