

**Address by H.E. Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, Prime Minister of Japan
On the Occasion of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security:
The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy
Rome June 3, 2008**

Chair Prime Minister Berlusconi,
United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon,
Distinguished participants,

I would like to begin my remarks today by extending my gratitude to Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the FAO, for his initiative in convening this High-Level Conference to address the current serious sharp rise in food prices.

In 1968, a think tank was formed here in Rome gathering the wisdom of wise men from all over the world who accepted the call of Dr. Aurelio Peccei, an Italian. This think tank was to be known as the “Club of Rome.”

Four years later, in 1972, the Club of Rome released a report titled “The Limits to Growth” which gave a warning on exhaustion of resources and destruction of environment. This report caused a sensation when it was released. However, not many of us at the time took this prophecy seriously. As a result, we continued our dependence on fossil fuels without reflecting upon our lifestyle of mass production, mass consumption, and mass waste, thereby steadily increasing the emission of greenhouse gases.

Thirty years have passed since the Club of Rome issued the report. We are finally hearing the scream of the earth. Today, we gather here to solve together the global challenge.

As all of you gathering here are aware, the fundamentals of supply-demand balance of food are gradually becoming more and more unstable. Cultivable land barely increases anywhere in the world, the climate change continues to develop, and conversion of food for energy use is increasing; nevertheless, the world population is continuing its growth. It is estimated that over 100 million people are newly at risk of hunger as a result of this threat, and we find ourselves confronting the possibility that our efforts thus far to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) may be hindered.

Last week, I chaired the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or “TICAD IV,” where I exchanged views with 40 African leaders and was reminded of the gravity of this issue. Therefore, I am attending this Conference with the strong sense of urgency.

Basic Thinking

Mr. Chair,

The question is what we should do in light of this situation.

In brief, we must share a common recognition of the gravity of the situation, thoroughly analyze its causes, and undertake fully in concert comprehensive and coherent measures ranging from emergency responses to medium- and long-term efforts.

We must take actions based upon collected wisdom and insights.

Therefore, I consider the “Comprehensive Framework for Action” introduced today by Secretary-General Ban to be an extremely important foundation for our efforts. I would like to extend my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban for his prompt response to this issue.

Emergency and short-term response measures to this crisis

First and foremost, we must extend the hand of assistance to people who are, at this very moment, suffering from food insecurity or hunger, as there is simply no time to lose.

It was from this perspective that Japan announced an emergency food aid package of roughly 100 million US dollars to be disbursed by July of this year, to add to the approximately 85 million dollars of food aid Japan has already distributed within 2008. Furthermore, Japan has also provided 10 million dollars of assistance this year to farmers in poverty to boost food production, and we will distribute another roughly 50 million dollars at the earliest possible time.

We must urgently secure social safety nets for people who have newly fallen into hunger and measures to support crop planting for this year and the next. Japan intends to make further active contributions in this area under the coordinated international framework, including partnership with the Global Food Crisis Response Program recently announced by The World Bank.

There have been difficulties in procuring rice in the international markets as a result of recent price rises. Japan is prepared to release in the near future over 300 thousand tons of imported rice held by the Japanese government. I would like to call on other countries to release to the international markets their stockpiles of food, to return some degree of equilibrium to the food market, which has been heating up recently.

If it should be that the current food market situation has resulted from market speculation or other factors un-related to real demand, it is imperative that we

demonstrate strong political will to monitor these factors. Furthermore, we must consider the creation of some sort of mechanism to secure this political will.

In addition, Japan would like to call upon countries to refrain from instituting restrictions on agricultural exports and other measures.

At the WTO negotiating table, Japan proposed a scheme through which food importing countries would be able to assert their views upon the imposition of export restrictions. This too aims at the improvement of the environment which is necessary for smooth trade in agricultural products. We look forward to the support of the international community toward this proposal.

Medium- to long-term measures

If we are to resolve the issue of soaring food prices fundamentally, each country must maximize the use of its own potential resources and achieve greater agricultural production. Japan, as the world's largest net food importer, will engage in all possible efforts to contribute to stabilization of demand and supply of food in the world market through promotion of domestic agricultural reform and increasing our food self-sufficiency rate.

Improving agricultural productivity and the production capacity of African nations and other developing countries is also an urgent task. Japan has been proactively engaged in these areas, providing roughly 30% of DAC countries' total amount of assistance to agricultural, forestry, and fisheries sectors over the past five years to rank as the top provider of assistance in these fields. The international community must re-engage in the agricultural sector and endeavor to increase the amount of assistance it provides.

At TICAD IV that convened last week, I called for a doubling, over the next ten years, of Africa's output of rice, of which consumption is surging. Under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, which is Africa's own undertaking aiming at increasing agricultural productivity, Japan will, in cooperation with relevant countries and organizations, actively promote the infrastructure development such as irrigation, research into breed improvement, and human resource development to disseminate cultivation techniques and other measures.

Mr. Chair,

With regard to the soaring food prices as we are currently confronting, new factors not seen in food crises of the past, have been pointed out, such as linkages to the rising fuel prices, climate change, and relations with financial markets and energy markets. Therefore, our responses must be comprehensive and multi-faceted. Here I would like to mention just two points.

First, we must earnestly engage ourselves in measures for the mitigation of global warming. At the same time, measures are needed to enable the agricultural sector of developing countries to adapt to the impact of climate change.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in January, I announced a new financial mechanism on the scale of 10 billion US dollars to promote the “Cool Earth Partnership” in order to assist developing countries.

Secondly, we need to ensure that biofuel production is sustainable by carrying out such undertakings as to accelerate research on second-generation biofuels, which do not require food crops as feedstock, in order to bring them into practical production, so that global food security does not suffer on account of biofuel production. Japan will actively engage in such undertakings as well.

Toward the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit

Mr. Chair,

At the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit to be held next month, taking into account the discussions and outputs of this High-Level Conference, we will undertake full-fledged discussions on markets, trade, development, climate change, and energy, which are indeed the combined factors underlying soaring food prices, and then translate that into action. I am determined to issue collectively a robust message that will offer assurance and confidence for the future about food, which is the foundation for life and closely related to human security.

Thank you for your kind attention.