

Summary of Discussion

Japan-African Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

Summit Roundtable

As part of the follow up of TICAD V, the Japan-African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) Summit Roundtable was held in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly on 26 September, 2013. Chaired by Prime Minister Abe, the roundtable provided a rare opportunity for RECs and Japan to exchange views on the efforts and visions of RECs to promote agricultural development in Africa. The summary of discussion is as follows:

1. Participants

Japan: Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan (Chair)

Dr. Akihiko Tanaka, President, JICA

Africa: Chairs of RECs

ECOWAS: H.E. Mr. Alassane Dramane Ouattara, President of Côte d'Ivoire

SADC: H.E. Dr. Joyce Banda, President of Malawi

AMU/UMA: H.E. Mr. Ali Zaidan Mohammed Zaidant, Prime Minister of Libya

COMESA and EAC: Hon. Sam K. Kutesa, Foreign Minister of Uganda

IGAD: H.E. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia

ECCAS/CEEAC and CEN-SAD: H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Chad

NEPAD: H.E. Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese
Abroad of Senegal

Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, NEPAD's chief executive officer

Dr. Agnes Soucat, Director for Human Development, African Development Bank

TICAD Co-organizers (UN, UNDP, World Bank, AUC) and respective RECs Secretariat

2. Summary

(1) Remarks by Prime Minister Abe

Highlighting the efforts of RECs to promote agricultural development, Prime Minister Abe reiterated his commitment to supporting Africa's development efforts for "empowering farmers as mainstream economic actors" as agreed at TICAD V. Introducing Japanese women who launched high-value added agribusiness in Africa and also Japanese way of assistance on agriculture including NERICA (New Rice for Africa) rice, he re-emphasized the need to aim at agriculture that enables the farmer to earn money, not just to eat. He also stressed that having farmers become affluent leads to create a large consumer market that will support economic growth.

(2) Remarks by Dr. Mayaki, CEO of the NEPAD Agency

Underlining the critical role of RECs in achieving the targets set within the CAADP framework, Dr. Mayaki noted three priority areas within the context of the roundtable. The first priority is accelerating infrastructure and capacity development to increase agricultural productivity and value-addition. The second priority is “empowering farmers as mainstream economic actors” focusing on impact on agriculture, food and nutrition security. Touching upon the NEPAD efforts of implementing CAADP, Dr. Mayaki stressed the need to prioritize the transformation of smallholder farmers into commercial farmers as well as support to strengthen and expand small-medium entrepreneurship along the entire agriculture value chain. The third priority is promoting sustainable natural resource use which support farmers and rural communities to scale up climate smart agriculture.

(3) Remarks by Dr. Tanaka, President of JICA

Dr. Tanaka highlighted JICA’s strategy of “three arrows” to support agricultural development in Africa. The first arrow is the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Promotion, called “SHEP” which intends to facilitate the transition from agriculture that enables farmers to eat to agriculture that enables them to earn money. The second one is the “Coalition for African Rice Development”, called “CARD” which aims to double the annual rice production in sub-Saharan Africa. He highlighted the progress of the implementation of CARD since its launch in TICADIV 2008. The third arrow is to promote agricultural investment in Africa. Reiterating that AU, NEPAD and RECs will play an essential role to materialize CAADP and the Maputo Declaration, he reaffirmed JICA’s commitment to assisting agriculture development in Africa.

(4) General Discussions

- Many participants remarked on the importance of agriculture in Africa as an engine of growth, and also a catalyst to promote poverty reduction. Agricultural development is one of the priority areas not only for individual African countries but also RECs and the African continent as a whole.
- There was a clear view that region-wide development cooperation is critical to promote agricultural development in Africa and participants emphasized the role of RECs to that end. Participants expressed their high expectations for Japan to support the efforts of RECs to promote agricultural development in areas such as promoting agriculture technology and capacity building.

- Participants presented the visions and strategies of RECs towards expanding and growing the agricultural sector for economic transformation in their regions. These include developing regional agricultural policy, promoting interregional agricultural trade, and developing efficient regional market and value chain for agricultural products. Progress of the implementation of CAADP over the last decade was also highlighted.
- While Africa has great agricultural potential, there are a number of key challenges that remain to be addressed to fulfill its potential. The challenges that were stressed at the roundtable include improving productivity, developing infrastructure, improving access to finance and technology, building capacity, and increasing agricultural investment among others. It was also mentioned that RECs has a primary mission to abolish non-tariff barriers in the agricultural sector to expand agro-markets, thus promoting intra-regional trade.
- Many participants emphasized that it is essential and urgent to increase food production and productivity to ensure regional nutrition and food security in light of human security. The need to make African agriculture more climate-resilient, particularly in dryland was also highlighted.
- There was also acknowledgement of the special need to strengthen the role of female and smallholder farmers as a key player in agriculture by ensuring equal access and opportunity given that they produce the majority of food in African countries.

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