

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Ryoichi Horie,
Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of the Sudan,
on the Occasion of 1st Rice Sector Development Forum
At 9.00 a.m. on 17th February, 2013, Khartoum, Sudan**

H.E. Mr. ^{アリー オスマン ムハンマド ターハ} Ali Osman Muhammad Taha, 1st Vice President, Sudan

H.E. Mr. ^{ジャアファル アフマド アブダッラー} Gaffar Ahmed Abdalla, State Minister of Agriculture, Sudan

H.E. Prof. ^{エルズベイルバシール ターハ} El Zubair Bashir Taha, Governor of Al Jazeera State

Their Excellencies, Minister of Agriculture of Al Jazeera and Sennar State

Mr. Hiroyuki Mori, Chief Representative of JICA Sudan Office,

Mr. Osamu Nakagaki, Project Leader, JICA

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my utmost pleasure to attend this 1st Rice Sector Development Forum aiming at exchanging views and opinions of every stakeholder related to the rice sector in Sudan to identify and overcome bottleneck issues.

First of all, I would like to express my best regards and appreciation to

Your Excellency Ali Osman Mohamed Taha for your strong leadership and guidance and for attending today's forum.

Due to the aggravated recent economic situation, the Government of Sudan drew up the 3 year Economic Programme and is striving to overcome the current difficult economic challenges. Now, Sudan is at a critical stage of changing its economic structure that has been used to depend on oil. I believe that Sudan has a great potential for development as this country enjoys vast fertile lands, rich water resources, and industrious people. The agricultural sector, in particular, is considered as one of the most promising economic sectors that can replace the oil sector, and the Government of Sudan has been implementing a number of strategic policies for the improvement of this sector with clear objectives.

Japan shared the strategy of the Government of Sudan and JICA has been implementing "Capacity Building Project for Agricultural Revival". Based on the Japanese experience of rice production and its support to other African countries in fields, JICA has been working with its Sudanese counterparts for the promotion of upland rice cultivation and implementation of the demonstration farms in Al Jazeera and White Nile States since 2010 along with the strategy of the Sudanese Government. In 2013, the project has expanded to Sennar, Gedaref, River Nile and Northern States.

Among various agricultural products in Sudan, rice has become one of the important strategic crops. Last October, I and Governor of Al Jazeera State, H.E. Dr. Zubeir, attended the Field Day in Al Jazeera State and we shared an unforgettable memory by harvesting rice with riding on a big harvesting machine together. At that time, I affirmed that the rice production in Sudan will definitely succeed. Currently Sudan is importing about 40 to 50 tons of rice annually; however, I expect that the rice production in Sudan will boost, and Sudan will become a pure exporter of rice in the near future through the cooperation between the Sudanese stakeholders and JICA experts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 5th of last September, I have submitted my credentials to President Omar Al Bashir and I assured the President that Japan recognizes Sudan as one of the most important counties for peace and stability in Africa and the whole world, and Japan has committed itself to support Sudan, not only through international organizations but also more actively through bilateral development assistance. I assure you all that Japan is going to continue its cooperation to Sudan in the future with a strong focus on the agricultural sector. Actually, one of the first grant projects which I signed since my arrival to Sudan, was “The Project for Upgrading Food Production Infrastructure” to provide irrigation facilities in River Nile and Kassala States.

We understand that it is impossible to have a good crop without exerting efforts and care by all stakeholders including the Government of Sudan, the State Governments and all individual farmers as well as JICA experts. I hope that today’s forum will be fruitful and will contribute to address the bottleneck issues of the rice production in Sudan.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere respect and appreciation to everyone who has been working on this project. I am really looking forward to seeing Sudan as a big exporter of rice in near future. I also appreciate the Government of Sudan and the State Governments for their cooperation and assistance rendered to the Embassy of Japan and JICA.

Thank you very much. Shukran Jazeelan.

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