

Welcome Address

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council, it is my great pleasure to give an address on the occasion of the 7th International Symposium marking the TARC-JIRCAS 30th anniversary.

First of all, I would like to congratulate TARC and JIRCAS on the achievements made during this period.

I would also like to express my appreciation to all the Directors General of the CGIAR-group centers and other distinguished guests who will attend this symposium.

Let me take this occasion to introduce the Council's basic strategy on international research. We published a document titled "Ten-Year's Plan of Research and Development for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries" in November last year. Regarding the international research programs, three major aspects were as follows:

First, "promoting research collaboration with developing countries" through JIRCAS in Southeast Asia, South America and Africa.

Second, "strengthening cooperation with international research organizations, such as CGIAR-group centers". We have dispatched about 100 Japanese researchers up to now to the CG-centers and other international organizations for research cooperation. More than half of them were dispatched by TARC and JIRCAS. We plan to further strengthen the relationship among these institutions in future, too.

Third, "inviting researchers from developing countries to carry out research collaboration". We have been implementing this program at JIRCAS and National Institute of Agrobiological Resources in Tsukuba. In addition to the fellowship program implemented at the Headquarters in Tsukuba, JIRCAS invites senior researchers to conduct collaborative studies at the Okinawa Station on Ishigaki island, taking advantage of the subtropical environment there. JIRCAS has also invited more than 800 people in the past 30 years from all over the world. We intend to widen and strengthen this human network thereafter as well.

In addition to these programs, we plan to launch a new program in the next fiscal year. That is, capacity building in the area of biotechnology which is gaining more importance for developing countries. Undoubtedly, biotechnology is essential for a further increase of food production to cope with population pressure in the regions. Also we have to pay attention to this novel technology from the viewpoint of environmental protection through risk assessment according to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Such importance was repeatedly stressed by a number of delegates at the FAO Regional Conference for Asia and Pacific region which was held in Yokohama, in August this year, and also, on the occasion of the Okinawa G8 summit in July this year, G8 leaders declared that "G8 will work to strengthen their support for

developing countries' capacity building to harness the potentials of biotechnology". We would like to commit ourselves to this important task.

Now I would like to comment on the title of this symposium "Agricultural Technology Research for Sustainable Development in Developing Regions". Our government drafted a new "Agriculture Law" in July last year after almost 40 years since the former law was enacted in 1961. In this law, the importance of multifunctionality of agriculture is emphasized. The concept of multifunctionality is that agriculture fulfills multiple functions, including food security, preservation of land, creation of landscape, etc. It should be noted that this multifunctionality cannot be displayed, unless agricultural systems are sustainable. Therefore, I believe that the development of technology for sustainable agricultural systems is a major objective for agricultural research in the new era, regardless of regions and countries.

While JIRCAS has organized an international symposium every year, since 1994, titles of the last two symposia in 1996 and 1998 were related to the sustainability of agricultural systems. This year, JIRCAS again selected the same subject on the occasion of its 30th anniversary. This fact indicates that multifunctionality of agriculture is our major concern.

Finally, I would like to conclude by congratulating again JIRCAS and its counterpart organizations on their collaboration for the past 30 years, and express my hope that this symposium will mark another milestone for further collaboration in the coming new century as well.

Thank you very much.