

Statement by Minister Eiichi Oshima, Representative of Japan (19 April 2005)

launched the "African Village Initiative." This initiative aims at empowering local communities to meet their own needs. It takes the form of a core project with a series of related multi-sectoral projects. For example, a school construction project will be implemented in close collaboration with supporting programs such as school meal programs, well excavation and health care services, so that it empowers the entire community with the school as its core. By having a well in the community, not a few children will be freed from the chore of fetching water from a remote well, and thus be afforded the time to go to school. When the midday meal is provided, the nutritional condition of the children will be improved. If, in addition, the child of a poor family brings a portion of the meal home, the family will then have greater incentive to send the child to school. My delegation wishes to cooperate with the DPI to promote greater interest in and awareness of endeavors of this kind in Africa and other areas in the world.

Mr. Chairman,

We are aware that, since the reform proposal of the Secretary-General was issued in 2002, the Department, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Mr. Shashi Tharoor, has taken the lead in striving for reform in the Secretariat, and Japan highly appreciates the Secretariat's concrete actions and initiatives to that end, which are enumerated in the recent SG report (A/AC.198/2005/2). Among the various improvements, I believe that quite a few people feel that the UN website has improved substantially. For example, now we can follow press releases, press briefings and press conferences through the frequently updated "UN News Centre." We are pleased to note that the DPI has been so successful in conveying the activities of the UN to a considerable number of people around the world, and within the limits of existing resources. I am convinced that the improved reliability of the UN website is the central reason behind the increase in the number of hits on the UN website. The improvement of public information services will be achieved through a continuous process. It is not a one-time event. That is why we expect that the Department will continue its efforts in that direction on the basis of what has been acquired through these reforms and the restructuring.

Now let me touch upon the subject of the rationalization of the network of the UN information centres. In the last three years, we saw the establishment of the regional United Nations information centre in Western Europe, which is the only real achievement in terms of a regional hub so far, and my government pays high respect for the determination and efforts of DPI and the Western European countries. UNIC Tokyo is also one of the centres mentioned in the SG report (A/57/387) which are located in high-cost, developed countries. In this connection, despite severe budgetary constraints, my government made a great effort to ensure that UNIC Tokyo would not absorb a large proportion of DPI's resources, contributing as much as 350,000 dollars in assistance for its activities this year. Allow me to point out that this represents an increase of more than 70% in support over a three-year period.

UNIC Tokyo is the only centre from which the United Nations issues information in Japanese, and it therefore plays an extremely important role in furthering an awareness of the importance of the UN among the Japanese people. For example, "EXPO 2005 AICHI, JAPAN" began in March this year, with the theme, "Nature's Wisdom", and the UN is

sponsoring the United Nations Pavilion at the exposition, focusing on "Celebrating Diversity." UNIC Tokyo is playing a key role in drawing greater public attention to the UN Pavilion. UNIC Tokyo is also continuing the promotion of the Global Compact initiative, and has now assumed the role of the secretariat of the Global Compact Japan Network. My government will continue to work in close cooperation with the Centre to encourage the participation of Japanese companies in this initiative.

Mr. Chairman,

It is essential to reach an agreement on the new United Nations prior to the summit in September. The time is ripe for action, and Japan expects that the public information activities of the Department will play a key role in appealing worldwide public opinion to support the efforts for UN reform.

Thank you.