

Congratulatory Remark
by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi

Your Majesty the Emperor, Your Majesty the Empress, African Leaders participating TICAD, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I congratulate Dr. Brian Greenwood and Professor Miriam Were on their award of the First Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize.

Hideyo Noguchi died in Ghana, Africa, in 21 May, 80years ago. But now, I feel as if his soul has descended from heaven to congratulate the two laureates together with all of you.

The concept of this Prize suddenly came to my mind when I was on the airplane on my way to Ethiopia during my official visit to Africa in May 2006. Africa is the region on the globe most seriously affected by the problem of disease. Africa is an issue of common interest of the international community recurrently discussed in the G8 Summit. Biographies and films portraying the the life of Hideyo Noguchi have continued to touch me throughout the years. These together brought me to ask myself: is there any way I can contribute to the progress of medicine and advancement of health succeeding Noguchi's aspiration? This led to the idea of creating a new prize comparable to the Nobel Prize to award researchers and health activists, regardless of their nationalities, fighting diseases in Africa.

Hideyo Noguchi's involvement in Africa is as shown in the video and perhaps requires no further mentioning; but it may be worth recalling that what is required now to confront the health challenges in Africa is precisely this passion for research, sense of mission and valor that Noguchi demonstrated when he ventured to travel to Ghana at the peak of his career to continue his research on yellow fever notwithstanding the snug reputation that he enjoyed worldwide. These were the thinking behind my launching of this initiative.

I had consulted President Kufuor of Ghana and Chairman Konare of the AU Commission broaching this new idea. Both of them supported me wholeheartedly. I promised them that the first award ceremony will take place in 2008 during TICAD IV. I am overwhelmed with emotion that this has come to fruition today.

The another important feature of this Prize is the way in which the prize money is created. Since this is a government prize, the prize money will be financed first and foremost by the government; however, we welcome donations to the Prize Money Fund from those who are supportive of the ideals of this prize. We organized the Donation Committee last June and I assumed the Chair of this committee. We have been calling on the public within Japan and internationally as well. We were able to collect a sizable amount of donation to date. By rewarding those researchers and activists fighting diseases in Africa, we are helping those who are suffering from diseases in Africa. This shows how the goodwill of each one of us will add up to a bigger end. I firmly believe that the donation process, with the passage of time by ten years and twenty years, will be playing an important role to maintain and ensure transparency, fairness and diversity of the Prize.

I know that there are many people attending the ceremony today who have made donations to the Fund. I wish to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Donation Committee, our sincere gratitude to each and all of them.

Last but not least, I would like to pay tribute to Dr. Greenwood and Professor Were for their outstanding achievements and wish them continued successes in their future endeavours.

Thank you for your attention.