

Check against delivery

Closing the Global Health Divide through Partnership Driven Innovation
Opening Remarks by Ambassador Keiichi Hayashi
at the Embassy of Japan
on Tuesday 11 November 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to thank you all for attending today's event, entitled 'Closing the Global Health Divide through Partnership Driven Innovation', and co-hosted by GHIT Fund and the Embassy of Japan.

I would like to start by emphasising the significance of the event. The world is currently facing immense challenges posed by the Ebola virus. It would be a cliché merely to say that it is no longer a problem just for the African region, but has become a global crisis. In fact the United Nations Security Council in its unanimous decision has recently recognised the Ebola virus disease as threatening international peace and security.

What is required now is action; actually a lot of actions, indeed, and prompt ones. Now is the time for the world, both through our public sectors and private companies, to come together to immediately set out to develop measures to contain the current situation and to prevent further outbreaks.

On its part the Japanese Government announced a few days ago an additional contribution amounting to 100 million dollars to accelerate international efforts to deal with the threat, on top of the already disbursed 40 million dollars of financial assistance and the already announced provision of 500,000 protective suits as well as many transport vehicles.

The GHIT Fund, which was established by public sectors and private companies in order to promote innovation in the fight against such infectious diseases, can and should play a vital role in our response to this crisis. I do not know if the organisers of today's event had the gift of foresight in choosing the right time to gather the right people together. It is a Great HIT, indeed.

Today we are joined by a number of eminent figures in the field of global health, including Professor Kiyoshi Kurokawa, Professor Peter Piot and Professor Brian Greenwood. Later on we will be hearing from Professor Piot, one of the scientists who first discovered the Ebola virus back in 1976. According to him we have "no time to lose" in our fight against Ebola.

It is significant and no coincidence that this conference is taking place here in the UK, where exists the world-renowned NHS, which sets such high standards in safeguarding and promoting health and hygiene. Japan is also proud of its advanced medical

standards achieved under its universal social insurance healthcare system, as well as its unmatched levels of public hygiene. Along with promoting its concept of 'Universal Health Coverage' around the world, Japan now finds it its mission to drive further innovation through pharmaceutical products to overcome future outbreaks of such vicious diseases.

In fact, an influenza drug developed by a small Japanese company may turn out to be effective against the Ebola virus and is currently being tested on patients. The GHIT Fund is here to continue to help such innovation, and to deliver it to those desperately in need.

Frankly, I have no qualification to grasp the medical or clinical aspects of the problem, but as an individual who has children and grandchildren I find it deeply disturbing to have to follow powerlessly the news of the havoc caused by the spread of such a disease.

I am fully conscious that GHIT cannot confine itself to a single disease in a particular context but has to work on the basis of a decidedly forward-looking and far-reaching perspective. In reality, however, never have I placed so much hope on a single conference. Today we all look forward to substantial discussions among our most prominent experts, which I hope will set a significant milestone in our endeavours to address this scourge on humanity. Thank you.