

Tackling Neglected Diseases of poverty together

With continuing and increasing worldwide fears of infectious diseases, intensified and novel ways of combatting them are desperately needed. Fortunately, the world is responding in innovative ways, technology, funding and partnerships. Japan has a long history of conquering several diseases of poverty, eradicating lymphatic filariasis and schistosomiasis among others. On the global stage, Japan has been a world leader for decades in the battle against infectious diseases. And we are proud of our nation's accomplishments and our efforts to try and help others to improve their human security.

In Africa, strategies for the eradication of onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis, using donated ivermectin, have been producing excellent results. With elimination possibly not too far away. Hopefully, such interventions will be intensified and extended quickly to combat other diseases. In Ghana and Burkina Faso in 2004, I witnessed ivermectin distribution first hand, and realized the enormous impact the control of these diseases has on the health and welfare of humankind.

We all know that new drugs and medical interventions are in constant demand. My research group at The Kitasato Institute-Kitasato University is making good progress in discovering novel therapeutic and preventive drugs for Malaria, Leishmaniasis, and Chagas disease, among others. We are also hoping to establish more international partnerships, especially in Africa, to accelerate this progress. Above all, I am hopeful that our young researchers will seize the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Kitasato alumni and enthusiastically tackle the problem of NTDs, as well as forming connections and collaborations to explore cultures and exchange knowledge with others trying to achieve the same goals.

My basic approach to life and research for 50 years has always been - "Without searching, nothing will be found!"

With the ever-increasing pace of the interchange of education, science and technology between Japan and Africa, I look forward to beneficial growth and greater collaboration among us all.

I wish this unprecedented TICAD conference, located in Africa for the first time, the greatest of success. And I wish all of you and your extended families a healthy and productive future, and a safe journey back to your homes, wherever they may be.

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