

Keynote Address by Ambassador Kenji Hiramatsu
at the session “Driving progress and innovation towards UHC and SDG3”
Preparatory Meeting of the Global Fund’s Sixth Replenishment (2020-22)
February 8, 2019

Mr. Peter Sands, Executive Director of the Global Fund,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to be here. Being a long-standing and ardent supporter of global health and Global Fund, I am pleased to see the Global Fund continuing its meaningful contribution towards the better health of people. As the Ambassador of Japan to India, I am happy to see that India is hosting this Preparatory Meeting for the first time as a recipient country.

I would like to thank the Global Fund Secretariat, the Government of India, and all the others involved, including the Government of France, which will host the Pledging Conference, for their invaluable efforts.

All the targets under SDG3 are interlinked. I would like to emphasize today that achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and tackling infectious diseases should go hand in hand. HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria are the risks vulnerable people are facing every day. They are treatable and preventable. That is why ensuring universal access to quality healthcare is essential. Indeed, the prevention and treatment of these diseases can best be realized through UHC, while UHC can be advanced most sufficiently by building on the existing programs against these diseases. The Global Fund has a critical role and responsibility to help achieve UHC.

Some people say the work of the Global Fund on specific infectious diseases is a vertical approach, while promoting UHC is a horizontal approach. Such a dichotomy does not make sense if you look at this issue from the perspective of people. Both approaches are both indispensable and indeed mutually reinforcing. I commend that this meeting allocated its precious time to elaborate on this point through the subsequent panel discussions.

Investment in UHC combined with disease intervention through the Global Fund is essential and urgent, because this is an investment for the people’s future. The Sixth Replenishment is being held at a time when we should get a tight grip on our efforts to eradicate infectious diseases, because we are making steady progress in this direction.

Let’s take the example of India. The number of new patients of HIV/AIDS has dropped by 66%, between 2000 and 2015. Now, Prime Minister Modi is accelerating his efforts to combat and eradicate TB by 2025, advancing the target year from 2030. What is more, India has taken the vital first step towards UHC through its Ayushman Bharat scheme. The path to

UHC is not short, but Japan is willing to go along with India to help it reach the goal.

Today, I would like to raise three points which are both relevant to UHC and the mission of the Global Fund.

First, better coordination among relevant stakeholders should be in place for implementation on the ground. The starting point is to respect country ownership, as national contexts, governance systems and operations vary country by country. Aligning activities of relevant actors, including the Global Fund, WHO, UNICEF and others, with those of governments, is critical for maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of their activities. I commend the Global Fund for establishing country coordination mechanism (CCM), where partner country governments take lead. This mechanism can facilitate the achievement of UHC if fully exploited.

Second, domestic resource mobilization is indispensable. Domestic resource mobilization ensures the sustainability of countries' health programs. Actually, such approach complements my first point, as it naturally leads to responses based on their national priorities, making them even more effective. Stronger political commitment, administrative capacity building and human resource development are necessary to achieve domestic resource mobilization and to tailor local responses to local needs. The international community must support such political commitment through capacity buildings while respecting national ownership.

Third, we need to work closely with the private sector. This is the only way we can mobilize all the resources necessary to ensure healthy lives of people. I would like to commend the Global Fund, as it has nurtured a broad partnership with the private sector. Japanese companies are on board in this partnership. They have made substantial contribution to drastic decline of malaria deaths and infections by providing tools like long-lasting insecticide bednets, and reduction of HIV and TB morbidity and mortality by providing test kits, medicines, and other goods and services.

When we think of the role of the private sector, no one can miss the word of "innovation." We need to further think about innovative ways to engage with them. We should encourage innovation to allow more efficient and effective deliveries of health service.

The private sector is also spearheading innovation. For example, Otsuka Pharmaceutical has developed "Delamanid", a new TB medicine. Delamanid is the first innovation in 40 years to tackle Multiple Drug Resistant TB. What is more, Otsuka Pharmaceutical is taking an innovative approach by partnering with an Indian company at a very early stage, to deliver affordable drugs to countries with a high incidence of TB. I hope there would be an opportunity for the Global Fund to take advantage of such new innovations.

Japan has been leading the international efforts both on the Global Fund and UHC. The Global Fund is the offspring of G8 Kyushu-Okinawa Summit. UHC is a torch Japan has been holding to shine the future.

This year, Japan will once again be at the center of global health movement. Japan holds the Presidency of G20 and will host TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development). I assure you that UHC and global health are high on their agenda. Japan will take a lead to generate political commitment through these fora. For example, taking the opportunity of G20, Japan plans to provide a forum where Health Ministers and Finance Ministers can get together and discuss how to ensure sustainable health financing. Important topics include capacity building of health workforce, primary healthcare service provision, and a broad partnership.

Japan is committed to partnering with all the stakeholders, including the Global Fund, to realize an inclusive, sustainable, and healthy society. We invite you to share any practical and successful good examples to move forward together.

There will also be a High Level Meeting on UHC at the United Nations General Assembly this autumn. 2019 is thus a promising year and time is ripe.

I would like to conclude by expressing my best wishes for interesting panel discussions, the complete success of this entire event, and of course a successful Global Fund replenishment in October.

Thank you.