

GRIPS Congratulatory Remarks 12 October 2020

President Akihiko Tanaka,
Dear faculty members of GRIPS,
Dear alumni and students
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to be invited at this Award Ceremony of the first GRIPS SDGs Award, which is bringing the rich network of the GRIPS alumni under the umbrella of promotion of SDGs.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Sajjad Moghal on winning this prestigious award.

The GRIPS SDGs Award would certainly be a huge encouragement to the alumni community to continue their life-long journey in pursuit of a more sustainable society with greater equality, based on their academic experience at this esteemed institute.

I believe this unique network-driven award would set a role model for other academic institutions in Japan and beyond.

Importantly, the accordance of this award starts to take place in the first year of the Decade of Action to achieve SDGs, mobilizing all UN Member States and all stakeholders around the globe.

We all must scale up and speed up SDG actions to deliver on our promises.

This year, the foundations of our world have been shaken to the core, by COVID-19.

The pandemic has pushed us towards the worst recession in decades, with terrible consequences for the most vulnerable.

We need a path that brings health to all, revives economies, brings people in from the margins of society, and builds long-term

resilience, sustainability, opportunity and peace.

That path exists.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is designed to address the very fragilities and shortcomings that the pandemic has exposed. It will serve as compass to navigate us through the recovery phase to Build Back Better, not sliding back to Old Normal.

Our collective efforts are even more important than ever.

Together, we can make tremendous progress over the coming decade.

When the public appetite for change is matched with political will and smart policy choices, rapid progress is unstoppable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I had the privilege to work under the leadership of late Mrs. Sadako Ogata at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

As you well know, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, who sadly passed away last year, was predecessor of President Tanaka as JICA President.

She often encouraged us by saying “Think Globally, Act Locally”.

SDGs is a global common framework to provide a broad perspective for linking local actions and global agenda, with the strong spirit of partnership as lynchpin.

I believe the winning project, about which we will hear from Mr. Moghal soon, presents a best practice in which the resources, knowledge and expertise, energy, and motivation of every stakeholder were successfully mobilized under the flag of partnership. The project caters

for the most vulnerable, to ensure “No one will be left behind”.

Turning to Japan, Japanese society at large has embraced SDGs with passion and commitment, with a strong multi-stakeholder approach. This integrated approach has been mainstreamed into the SDG implementation strategy of the Japanese government since early stage. The SDGs Promotion Headquarters was formed as early as mid-2016, presided by the Prime Minister and joined by all the Cabinet Ministers, with a whole-of-government approach. The Headquarters is supported by the SDGs Promotion Roundtable with leading practitioners from cross sections of the society as its members, including President Tanaka and humbly myself.

In July, all the members of the Roundtable collectively came up with an urgent appeal to the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, calling for SDGs as the guiding light to end the pandemic, to respond to its socio-economic impacts, and to chart a course for a transformative recovery.

The excellent news is that starting this academic year, SDGs has been institutionally integrated into the school curriculum. School children are learning about SDGs across the board. This is a tremendous capacity building of the younger generation to lead the way towards sustainable future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Public appetite for transformative change is growing.

We see that in the Fridays for Future, Black Lives Matter, and Me Too movements.

At this critical juncture of historic transformation, what is needed

is that policy makers and political leaders honor these energies with right policy decisions.

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations is marking an important milestone of 75 years since it was born in the ashes of two World Wars.

We are now facing the greatest challenge since the founding of the Organization.

We must look beyond the current crisis and set our sights high, as we strike out for a world of dignity and opportunity for all, on a healthy planet.

Together, let us make this, a decade of ambition, and a decade of transformation.

Thank you.