



United Nations
University

*2010 Africa Day Symposium
UNU Headquarters, Tokyo
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*Opening Remarks
by Prof. Konrad Osterwalder
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Your Imperial Highness,

Your Excellency, Mr. Sar, Ambassador of the republic of Senegal
and Acting Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps,

Your Excellency, Mr. Hached, Ambassador of the Republic of
Tunisia and Chairperson of the 2010 Africa Day Symposium,

Your Excellency, Ms. Nishimura, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for
Foreign Affairs,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome all of you to this 2010 Africa Day
Symposium, organized jointly by the African Diplomatic Corps
(ADC) and the United Nations University.

It is both an honour and privilege for us to work with the ADC yet
again this year for the 11th Africa Day Symposium at the UNU.

Organization of the joint Africa Day Symposia commenced in 2000 with the goal of providing a platform for dialogue and of promoting innovative thinking on Africa-related issues. I believe we continue to make good progress each year towards this end.

Your Imperial Highness, your presence is not only a great honour for all of us it is also a very strong signal of the importance You and the Japanese Government assign to the issues of this symposium.

Instead of giving you a historical summary of the past 10 Africa Day Symposia, let me state and illustrate a claim I consider central:

The *claim* is simple: The basis of progress is Education, Research and creating Partnerships.

Here is the *illustration*. More than a billion people do not have access to safe drinking water. This causes 4 million cases of diarrhea and 2.2 million deaths annually, most in children under the age of 5. Some 20 years ago a simple method to disinfect household water was invented and developed, called SODIS, Solar Water Disinfection.

The method is simple. Put your water in a pet bottle, expose it to sunlight for 6 hours and the water is disinfected. That is the **research** part of it.

Tell the people to use the method. That is the **education** part of it, and it is the difficult part. SODIS has been promoted since 1995 but with varying success. The success rate after a promotion varies greatly. Only 4 months after introduction of the method, in some communities up to 70% of the people were using the method, thus reducing the cases of diarrhea dramatically, whereas in others only 9% and less. Why? A recent study shows that it all depends on how the method was introduced and taught. This is where **partnership** comes in.

Education, Research and creating Partnerships, building capacities, this is the core of UNU's mission. Our introduction of the idea of Twin Institutes is a crucial step in this direction. And Japan's joint efforts with the African community to build up partnerships is also crucial for the success of all the development programmes.

It is my hope that this Symposium will address not only the daunting environmental challenges that affect the African continent, but also identify the opportunities which exist to foster and enhance the efforts to strengthen education, research and partnership at all levels. This is the basis on which to build. Let me conclude by inviting all the Ambassadors present here to check with their government, whether the SODIS method is being promoted in their country - where appropriate. This would make this meeting to be a true success.

I am looking forward to an interesting and challenging dialogue.

Thank you