

**Remarks by Yohei Sasakawa
Chairman of The Nippon Foundation**

**Borlaug Legacy Symposium
July 10, 2014, Uganda**

1. His Excellency Edward Ssekandi, Vice President of the Republic of Uganda, Her Excellency, Mrs. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture at the African Union, honourable ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to be a part of this symposium to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr Norman Borlaug; the Nobel Laureate, and President of the Sasakawa Africa Association until his passing in 2009. And I am more than delighted that Norman's beloved daughter and granddaughter, Jeanie and Julie have graced us with their presence here today.

2. My relationship with Norman goes back 30 years. This was a time when an unprecedented famine was devastating a number of African countries – particularly Ethiopia. Humanitarian aid poured in from all over the world. As an organisation whose fundamental principle is “the world is one family, all mankind are brothers and sisters”, the Nippon Foundation immediately sent emergency food aid to help our ailing brothers and sisters in Africa. This support from the world saved many lives. But it was clear to me that emergency aid would only provide immediate to short-term relief. And so I sought to find a sustainable solution to Africa's food challenges.
3. This is what led my father who was the Chairman of the Nippon Foundation at the time and me to establish the SAA in 1986 and to seek the support of Dr Norman Borlaug and US President Jimmy Carter. President Carter embraced the initiative right away but Dr Borlaug who was 73 years old at the time hesitated. He said, “I've retired. I'm too old to start again.” My father replied, “I'm 13 years older than you. We should have started sooner so let's start tomorrow!” And this is how our journey in Africa began –to take on one of the most difficult challenges of humanity: Ending hunger.
4. Right away, numerous challenges needed to be addressed. Basic agronomic practices needed to be adopted; government extension services which was a serious weakness in most African countries at the time, needed to be

strengthened; and agricultural development needed to gain higher priority in government policies. Facing up to these issues was a daunting task, but Norman stood up to the challenge. He was not the kind of man to flinch or give up halfway. No matter how difficult the situation, he would always smile to me and say, “Yohei, we must never give up”.

5. This stayed true to the latter part of his life, when he was suffering from cancer. It was apparent that he no longer had the physical strength to spend weeks out in the field as he did before. Even in such trying circumstances, he put the people of Africa first. There was a time when we were out in the field and Norman was coughing uncontrollably. Many of us told him he should end the trip early and take some rest, but being a fearless fighter, he refused. He said, “In the field is where I need to be” and continued on.
6. In the two decades that Norman led the SAA, we set up Sasakawa-Global 2000 programmes in 14 countries in the African continent. We have worked with tens of thousands of extension workers, contributed to nurturing thousands of students in twenty African Universities, and through our programs, we have touched the lives of millions of Africa’s smallholder farmers.
7. When I say touched, I mean the hearts and souls of African farmers. Norman’s contribution went beyond imparting plowing and planting techniques. He believed in the untapped potential of Africa’s smallholder farmers. Working side by side in the fields, Norman not only helped the farmers to increase their yields, but he also succeeded in planting the seeds of confidence into their hearts. This humanitarian approach became the core value of all who worked under him and continues to be the foundation of the SAA.
8. Today, the Sasakawa Africa Association is an organisation which is predominantly African and more gender balanced—as it should be. Led by the stronger leadership of Professor Ruth Oniang’o, the organisation’s current focus is on the four African countries - Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda. Carrying on the Norman Borlaug spirit, the SAA is working with its expanding list of partner organisations to contribute to the sustainable development of agriculture in Africa.

9. So, in the words of Norman Borlaug, let us “Take it to the farmer”. Let us continue down the path that this great man has set before us. And in the Norman Borlaug spirit of ‘never give up,’ let us renew our commitments to work side by side with the farmers of Africa to help improve their lives and ensure that no child will go to bed hungry.

Thank you.



CLOCKWISE: Mr. Yohei Sasakawa in Uganda, Mr Sasakawa shelling maize-in Uganda, Mr Sasakawa with young winners in Uganda