

“U.S.-Japan Dialogue:
Strengthening the Partnership on Global Health”

Special Remarks
by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan
Yasuhisa Shiozaki

May 3, 2017
CSIS, Washington, D.C.

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues in Global Health, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to thank CSIS and JCIE for organizing this timely dialogue. In February, Prime Minister Abe and President Trump affirmed their determination to further strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance and economic relationship. Besides national security and economics, I believe health also sets a firm ground for peace, prosperity, and freedom that the two nations have long pursued. In fact, this morning, I have just signed the Memorandum of Cooperation between our Ministry and the Department of Health and Human Services with Secretary Price to strengthen our collaboration in health.

I would like to share my views on three key challenges and opportunities for Japan and the U.S., namely, reinforcing health security, promoting value-based health care, and facilitating innovation.

One prominent challenge is to reinforce health security. The Ebola outbreak in 2014 exposed the fundamental fragility of the global health architecture for health crises. Health emergency risks, including outbreaks and antimicrobial resistance, AMR, pose a threat to national and global security and thus require collective action. In fact, it was here in Washington, D.C. one year ago that Dr. Chan of the WHO, Mr. O'Brien of the UN OCHA, and Dr. Nabarro, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Ebola, gathered at the Embassy of Japan, then G7 president, together with our Ministry and HHS, when we finally agreed on the basic framework of the new global health architecture for large-scale outbreaks.

What we have to ensure is that the new framework really functions. It is vitally important that Japan and the U.S. firmly commit ourselves to assist the incoming DG of the WHO to embrace the new framework for collaboration and fully implement its own reform towards “One WHO” with a clear vision, leadership, and a line of authority, which Japan and the U.S.

have jointly requested.

However, collective action at the global level alone is not enough. We have continued to argue that resilient health systems at the country level are vital to assuring health security and resilience. We appreciate and acknowledge that the U.S. is leading the joint G7 commitment to assist IHR implementation in 76 countries.

Japan is committed to support countries especially in the Asia Pacific and African regions. For example, a month before the G7 Ise-Shima summit last year, Japan held the first ministerial meeting on AMR in Tokyo, inviting Asia-Pacific countries, and hosted TICAD VI in Kenya to accelerate Africa's path towards resilient health systems. In July this year, we are inviting ASEAN health ministers to the first ASEAN-Japan Health Ministers Meeting to further strengthen health systems in ASEAN countries. It is our firm belief that Japan and the U.S. have a common interest in preparing for and responding to future health crises on a global scale.

The second challenge is to promote value-based health care. This necessitates establishing patient-centered personalized medicine by leveraging ICT and big data analytics. Against this backdrop, Japan has launched "Data-driven health reform," by which we will establish a nation-wide data platform, integrating health-related data from providers, payers, and governments and encompassing preventive, medical, and long-term care. This platform will enable individuals to utilize personalized health records, taking full advantage of the portable and comprehensive set of historical data to maximize the value of their health care. This platform will also enable any physicians and researchers to develop new medical treatments as well as evidence-based preventive care and enable the pharmaceutical industry to develop new drugs. We will also be able to embark on establishing evidence based long-term care, where we analyze the effectiveness of the care provided in relation to patients' functional capacity.

As one in two people in Japan suffer from cancer in their lifetime, it is our priority to apply personalized medicine in the area of cancer. Therefore, we are developing a national strategy to end cancer, which incorporates genomic medicine as its foundation, which will leverage the full potential of artificial intelligence. By collecting clinical and genomic data and by leveraging the promising technologies of liquid biopsy, immunotherapy, and heavy particle therapy, each patient can benefit from the most effective, optimized, and tailor-made treatment covered by public health insurance. A partnership between Japan and the U.S. on this front will inevitably enhance the value of health care patients receive in the two countries and across the world.

The third challenge is to facilitate innovation in health care, which also drives economic growth. In Japan, I have initiated three major reforms in the health care industry to exponentially promote innovation while assuring access to sustainable and high-quality health care. We will reward innovation by introducing a pricing system that reflects the value for patients and cost-effectiveness, while facilitating more competition. Another reform is to enhance the R&D competitiveness of the medical industry through nurturing entrepreneurship and supporting further development of promising areas including biopharmaceuticals and regenerative medicine. Additionally, we will globalize the industry to contribute to global health through innovative technology, while creating a globally harmonized regulatory environment where innovation is assured. Japan's recent decision to participate in the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, CEPI, reflects our determination to further contribute to global health, while fostering the global competitiveness of our vaccine industry.

There are ample opportunities for Japan and the U.S. to jointly lead the way in delivering the most innovative health technologies, taking advantage of Japan's strengths including the promising seeds it has developed in basic research and manufacturing technologies, and strengths of the U.S., including translational research and entrepreneurship in the bio-medical industry.

Japan and the U.S. have a long-standing legacy of collaboration in the field of health. This collaboration is exemplified by the 50 years of the Japan-U.S. Cooperative Medical Sciences Program, a bilateral collaboration on medical research that has existed a little longer than my own relationship with the U.S. that started in the late 60s when I was an AFS student in California. I am convinced that today's dialogue will mark a new firm milestone for our enhanced collaboration in global health that will undoubtedly add another dimension to our unshakeable Japan-U.S. Alliance.

Thank you very much.