Speech in Commemoration of the Distinguished Career of Madame Sadako Ogata
April 10, 2012

Honorable Representative Fukuda,
Madame Ogata,
Your Excellency Vice Minister Hamada,
President Tanaka of JICA,
Honorable Parliamentarians,
Your Excellency Ambassador Yamamoto,
Colleagues, Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors,
Mr. Akimoto, Chief of Protocol
Director-General Nakahara,
Director-General Kaibara,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to welcome all of you to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on this beautiful spring day. Spring is the season of birth and beginning – this being the reason that in Afghanistan we recently celebrated our new year on March 20th. Today, as many flowers blossom, we gather to commemorate the start of another chapter in the life of Madame Sadako Ogata, and to pay respect to her distinguished service to the world’s citizens as President of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Ladies and gentlemen, to mention the name “Sadako Ogata” is to inspire thoughts of a better world. There are few other people today who have done so much to enhance lives in our global society, and even fewer for the people of Afghanistan. This inspirational woman’s name is forever linked to our country - physically and symbolically – through the road in Kandahar named after her; through the Afghan passport that carries her name, awarded by H.E. President Karzai in 2010; and for its association with countless projects that have improved and prolonged the lives of my people. The screen to my side here lists a number of indicators of improvements in Afghanistan that have come within the time of Madame Ogata’s presidency. The slides will continue to play throughout this event as a tribute to her efforts.

Mine is a nation of hope and motivation, but we could not have reached the successes shown in these slides without the selfless cooperation of the international community. The noble nation of Japan has been a key figure in our shared efforts, and we are forever grateful. I am humbled to also say that so many other nations in the world have also worked together with us; the world’s shared determination has been moving. So many of Your Excellencies who join us today represent nations that have given inspiring support, and have sacrificed your children for our freedom and betterment. To all of You, and to those who could not join us, let me also thank you. We will honor you in our determination, and we will strive in our development so we may too reach a point where we are a larger supporter of nations in need.
Therefore, in this context of generous and effective support to our peace and development, it is an honor to gather in recognition of and to extend, on behalf of my people and Government, deepest gratitude to Madame Ogata for her enduring efforts in my nation and many more, including many of those whose esteemed representatives join us today. Therefore, let me instead say that the gratitude expressed today to this amazing individual is indeed on behalf of all of our peoples and Governments.

In closing, let me express my determination to work towards a more peaceful, harmonious, and equal world, through the foundations laid by Madame Ogata, with her qualified successor Mr. Akihiro Tanaka. Allow me to also say that I assured knowing that we can continue to count on Madame Ogata’s friendship and support in all her distinguished life’s further endeavors. I would like all of you to help me make this afternoon an appropriate celebration of Madame Sadako Ogata.

Thank you and God bless you all.