

## Annan envoy urges Japan to keep its promise of 0.7% of GDP for ODA

By TARO KARASAKI, Staff Writer

An envoy of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan strongly urged Tokyo on Monday to follow through on a decades-old promise to give more official development assistance (ODA) to poor nations.

Jeffrey Sachs, head of the U.N. Millennium Project development plan, said the international community expects Japan to keep its word—especially if it gains a coveted permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

Sachs, also a special adviser to Annan, visited Sunday through Monday as part of a global tour to tout an action plan to fulfill millennium development goals agreed to by U.N. member states in 2000.

He told The Asahi Shimbun that he hoped Japan and other donors would set a timetable for achieving the goal of devoting 0.7 percent of gross domestic product for development aid by 2015. Japan and donor countries promised to do this as far back as 1970.

“This is how many countries feel right now; that together with leadership comes the responsibility to fulfill commitments that have been made,” Sachs said, referring to Japan’s longstanding bid to secure a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

Sachs noted that the donor community, including Japan, had repeatedly failed to achieve target figures.

Sachs said Germany, another aspirant for permanent Security Council membership, is likely to shortly announce a timetable for 0.7 percent of GDP for aid.

Sachs said he understood calls within Japan to allocate ODA more strategically to meet national interests. But he stressed that helping developing countries, such as promoting good governance through development aid, would serve Japan’s long-term interests.

“We also believe in strategic ODA, but in the sense that assistance should be directed to the countries that are making the appropriate effort themselves to achieve these international goals,” Sachs said.

Tokyo should carefully assess where aid is being used, and monitor development projects to avoid criticism that funds are being wasted, he added.

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Halving the number of people living in extreme poverty--those scraping by on less than \$1 a day--by 2015 is part of the goal of the millennium development plan announced in 2000. By setting aside 0.7 percent of GDP, donor nations can achieve that goal, Sachs said.

Currently, five European countries--among them Sweden and the Netherlands--have already managed to set aside 0.7 percent of their GDP for aid. Six others, including France, Britain and Spain, have set timetables to meet the target, he said.

``We're not asking for any new pledges,'' Sachs said. ``Just to follow through on what they (donor countries) themselves have said.'' (IHT/Asahi: March 8, 2005)

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