

## Meeting with African Leaders

*At the end of September and beginning of October 2003, Special Ambassador Yohei Sasakawa held meetings with the political leaders of six African countries who were in Japan to attend the Third Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD III).*

*Responding to Mr. Sasakawa's request that more attention be paid to leprosy elimination, all of these leaders expressed concern and confirmed a strong commitment to the elimination efforts in their countries, and all showed an impressive grasp of the situation. Their remarks follow.*

### President of Burkina Faso, H.E. Blaise Compaoré



"In our country, we have an annual solidarity day for leprosy elimination. I myself attend the ceremonies every year, as my schedule permits. I would like to invite you, Mr. Sasakawa, to come to our country and participate in these Leprosy Day activities. I can accompany you into the field so that we can observe leprosy elimination activities together."

### President of Mozambique, H. E. Joaquim Chissano



"We can eliminate leprosy with systematic treatment. The current trend is for people to pay more attention to newly emerging diseases and to forget about the effort that they have spent on old diseases such as leprosy. This is not a healthy situation. We appreciate your unwavering commitment and work toward leprosy elimination."

### Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E. Meles Zenawi



"We are very grateful for your continuous efforts toward leprosy elimination. Leprosy has caused social discrimination in our country because many people have a fear of the disease. We must change the perception of the people and rehabilitate the patients. We will work together with you toward elimination."

### President of Nigeria, H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo



"Poverty has many faces. Leprosy is one of these. In order to eliminate leprosy, accessibility, availability and affordability of information regarding prevention, diagnosis and treatment are necessary. I will personally join in this crusade for a world without leprosy."

### President of Mali, H. E. Amadou Toumani Touré



"We have worked on leprosy elimination for many years together with AFRF (Association Française Raoul Follereau) and WHO. Mali has been a center of research on leprosy and I would like to refer you to the research data accumulated in our country. Leprosy patients suffer from both the disease and from poverty as well. It is important to organize social rehabilitation programs, particularly in rural agricultural villages."

### President of Senegal, H.E. Abdoulaye Wade



"In Senegal, AFRF has been working from the early stages of leprosy elimination activities. There still remain patients. The difficult thing is the social rehabilitation of former patients. At the moment, we are working to establish a social rehabilitation center for disabled people and patients of other diseases as well."

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#### Publisher

Yohei Sasakawa

#### Editor in Chief

Tatsuya Tanami

#### Proofing Editor

James Huffman

#### Contributing Staff

Ron Faxon, Akiko Nozawa

#### Photographer

Natsuko Tominaga

#### Editorial Office

#### WHO Special Ambassador's Newsletter

5th Floor, Nippon Foundation Building

1-2-2 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8404, Japan

Telephone: +81-3-6229-5601 Fax: +81-3-6229-5602

Email: smhf\_an@tnfb.jp

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