

Summary of inaugural speech by Dr. Shinichi Takeuchi, ASC-TUFS Director

On behalf of the **African Studies Center–Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (ASC-TUFS)**, I extend my deepest gratitude for your attendance at its inaugural ceremony.

I would like to begin by explaining the significance of the new center's name. While the official English name, African Studies Center, is sufficient to explain the new center's general function, the Japanese appellation of *Gendai Africa Chiiki Kenkyu Center*, which can be literally translated as **Center for Area Studies on Contemporary Africa**, is much more specific. A couple of key phrases in the Japanese name help to clarify the reasons for the establishment of the Center.

The first key phrase is “contemporary Africa”. In Japan, the ASC-TUFS is one of the few university centers of its kind and the only one clearly labeled as focusing on contemporary Africa. This is especially significant given Africa's importance in today's world. The government has made considerable efforts to strengthen Japan's relationships with the countries of Africa, such as through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), but even more substantial efforts to tackle the problems confronting contemporary Africa are required to further develop Japan's ties in Africa. The ASC-TUFS is expected to play a key role in this regard through research, education, and networking.

Contemporary Africa is distinguished by its rapid social changes and the great diversity of those involved in making those changes. A strong network that will benefit all concerned needs to be constructed that includes not only international and government organizations, NGOs, and the private sector, but also academic institutions. This kind of multi-faceted network will be indispensable for understanding Africa's changing features. We are ready to serve as the hub for just such a network.

“Area studies” is another key phrase included in the Japanese name. Contemporary Africa is currently being challenged to reduce poverty, sustain economic development, build peace, and cope with the serious effects of climate changes. Tackling these challenges requires in-depth knowledge based on multiple academic disciplines, and the ASC-TUFS will provide just the kind of inter-disciplinary approach that is required in its research activities.

The Tokyo University of Foreign Studies has long been a leader in African studies in Japan, and already has a Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), as well as an African Studies course in its School of International and Area Studies. Learning foreign languages is inseparably related to learning about the culture, society, politics, economy, and history of the speakers of those languages. TUFS has been offering in-depth language and area studies since its establishment, and therefore offers a fertile environment in which the new Africa Studies Center is certain to flourish.

The ASC-TUFS will has three main objectives: developing an extensive network among the many and diverse organizations involved in Africa; undertaking in-depth and high-quality African studies; and fostering the development of specialists with deep knowledge and love of Africa and its people. Your continued support and encouragement will be most appreciated as we strive to achieve these objectives.