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Honourable Mr Sasakawa, Dear President Deguchi, Dear Audience,

I stand in front of you today as proud member of the inaugural SYLFF Leaders Workshop - representing Ruhr University Bochum of Germany.

This workshop was designed to stimulate an exchange of ideas between practitioners and academics within the sylff family – coming from culturally diverse settings – working on the world’s most complex challenges – like the future of our food.

Everything about this new concept - from the choice of topic and methods to the sound cross cultural and Trans-disciplinary choice of workshop-participants makes sense to me.

It may have the potential to kick off joint projects between fellows – multilateral collaboration that could be supported with follow-up grants to put into practice the ideas that were born over the past days.

As you have noticed, I am a German – but wearing an African shirt – and you may wonder why that is. I received my first SYLFF grant in 2005 to travel to South Africa – for the first time, alone, anxiously and uncertain if I would survive - to conduct field research for my Master Thesis.

Nine years and a SYLFF-funded PhD thesis - later, I came to Cape Town to join my 2005 host institution, the University of the Western Cape to lecture and to bring young African Leaders into scholarships in my role as an academic representative of the German Government.

Without the grants that I have received from SYLFF -

- I wouldn’t have grown academically, the way I did with your support
- I would not have made the experience of living in Africa, teaching and mentoring young leaders and at the same time learning from them culturally every day.

- Also, I would not wear this African shirt which symbolizes an African note, added to my German Identity that I will wear until the end of my life.

For this difference that being a SYLFF fellow has made to my life, I simply want to express my deepest gratitude paired with the hope of being able to give something back to the SYLFF Family and to Japan.

Last but not least want to thank the colleagues from Tokyo foundation for the excellent organization of the workshop – at this point please remember again that am German - and for a level of comfort, kindness, openness and considerateness that I haven't experienced anywhere else in the world.