

After Kisarazu City was designated as “JICA Africa Hometown” of Federal Republic of Nigeria at the JICA Africa Hometown Summit, a thematic event at the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development, on August 21, the City of Kisarazu has been receiving numerous inquiries. These inquiries stem from reports by the Nigerian government and media coverage by the BBC and local newspapers in response to the Nigerian government’s report as well as reports on social media about the acceptance of immigration and immigrants and special visa issuance by the Japanese government. We would like to clarify this matter.

This designation of “JICA Africa Hometown” was organized by JICA to further strengthen the relationships between municipalities in Japan and African countries, which have been fostered through various events in the past, on the occasion of the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development and to contribute to the revitalization of local communities from the perspective of international cooperation.

Kisarazu City was designated as “JICA Africa Hometown” along with Imabari City, Sanjo City, and Nagai City, all of which have relationships with other countries in Africa. In regard to Kisarazu City, this designation is based on past exchange events such as hosting the “West African Festival” and serving as a Host Town for the Nigerian team during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and a future activity to cooperate in the human development of young locals in Nigeria through baseball and softball which utilizes JICA’s Grassroots Projects.

The purpose of the designation of “JICA Africa Hometown” is to deepen the relationships and exchanges between each municipality in Japan and each country in Africa, ultimately contributing to the revitalization of local communities. However, we view this situation as a result of the spread of false information that diverges from the intended purpose and objectives.

Since Monday, August 25, the city has been facing the need to respond to numerous concerns and worries about the acceptance of immigration and immigrants due to the spread of false information about this matter.

Therefore, the City of Kisarazu released the city’s opinion as the Mayor’s comment through our official website on the morning of that day. In the comment, we clarified that the City of Kisarazu neither requested nor acknowledged any of the false information.

Additionally, we emphasized that the information reported by the Nigerian government as well as that circulating online, including on social media, is unfounded.

After that, on the evening of the same day, the host JICA issued a news release stating “[...] reports suggesting the promotion of immigration acceptance or the issuance of special visas for travel between Japan and the respective countries [...] are all factually incorrect” and that “JICA is currently urging the relevant local media and the African government to promptly correct the inaccuracies contained in their coverage.” Likewise, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan also issued a press release on the matter.

On Tuesday, August 26, after the city’s regular press conference, the Mayor of Kisarazu City explained the background and situation of this matter to journalists in person and sincerely responded to questions afterward.

On the same day, the report released by the Nigerian government was removed and corrected. Moreover, we believed that accurate and truthful information about this series of events has been disseminated with the cooperation of many media outlets.

Furthermore, members of the host JICA, including the Executive Senior Vice President, visited the City of Kisarazu on August 28 and apologized to us in person for the series of events surrounding this matter. Additionally, JICA informed us that, in cooperation with the Japanese government, they are investigating why the Nigerian government released the factually inaccurate report and also listened to the city’s opinions regarding its situation.

The Mayor of Kisarazu City strongly requested that JICA widely disseminate information about the current situation, including the fact that the cause and reason of the false report are under investigation. Moreover, the Mayor requested the name “JICA Africa Hometown” be changed as the word “Hometown” can be easily associated with immigration or immigrants, which JICA promised to consider, and strongly urged JICA to ensure an appropriate response moving forward.

During the extraordinary press conference on the same day, August 28, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan apologized for the delay in the government’s response regarding the spread of factually inaccurate information and stated that they would endeavor to disseminate accurate information.

These are the background and situation up until now. As for the City of Kisarazu, there is no fact that the City of Kisarazu promotes the acceptance of immigration or immigrants from Nigeria, nor is there any plan to implement such initiative in the future, as stated in the city’s opinion (the Mayor’s comment) published on the city’s official website and other platforms.

In addition, the City of Kisarazu does not have any plans to accept interns from Nigeria.