

**Statement by Dr. Toshiko Abe
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan**

**22nd session of the Human Rights Council
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Mr. President,
Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to make a statement at the Human Rights Council on behalf of the Government of Japan.

I should first like to pay tribute to His Excellency Ambassador Mr. Henczel for his outstanding leadership in shouldering the heavy responsibility of acting as the President of the Council. Let me also commend the dedicated efforts being carried out around the world by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Pillay, and her Office.

Mr. President,

With regard to the human rights situation, the past year witnessed wide-ranging changes in many parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia.

The increasingly deteriorating situation in Syria and the continued humanitarian crisis are of deep concern. The international community needs to continuously take coordinated action regarding Syria in order to end all violence immediately and to restore the humanitarian situation as early as possible. Japan values the efforts undertaken by the Human Rights Council thus far, and shall continue diplomatic efforts to the maximum extent possible, in cooperation with the international community.

Japan highly values Africa's own initiatives in the Sahel region, including Mali, to improve the human rights situation as a foundation for peace and stability.

Mr. President,

Turning our eyes to Asia, Myanmar has made significant progress towards democratization and national reconciliation. Japan welcomes Myanmar's efforts in advancing political and economic reform on the human rights front and steadily implementing the release of political prisoners and the prohibition of censorship. Japan believes that it is important for the people of Myanmar to understand that the nation will enjoy prosperity as the reform progresses. As a part of this effort, Japan recently held its first Human Rights Dialogue with Myanmar. We are determined to play a leading role in the international community to support the further development of the reform in Myanmar.

On the other hand, challenges still remain in the Asian region with regard to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In particular, widespread and systematic violations of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been repeatedly pointed out in the objective reports by the UN Secretary General and the Special Rapporteur on human rights situation in the DPRK. Although the international community has repeatedly expressed its concerns, it is deeply regrettable that the dire human rights situation in the DPRK remains unchanged, such as with regard to the political prison camps that the High Commissioner has referred to as a "crime against humanity". It is truly regrettable that the DPRK has failed to implement any of the recommendations it received during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2009, and has consistently failed to allow the Special Rapporteur to enter its territory.

The DPRK has also failed to address with sincerity the abduction issue, which is a violation of the basic human rights and sovereignty of our country. The Government of Japan has so far identified 17

Japanese nationals, including a then thirteen-year-old girl, as victims of abduction by DPRK intelligence agents, and 12 of whom have not returned to Japan. In addition, there are more cases of missing persons for which the possibility of abductions cannot be dismissed. It has been ten years since the first Japan-DPRK summit meeting in 2002 in which the DPRK admitted for the first time that it had abducted Japanese nationals, apologized, and promised to prevent a recurrence. Over these years, the DPRK has stated at the United Nations General Assembly as well as at the Human Rights Council that “the abduction issue has been completely resolved”. However, we strongly hope that it will respond to the issue in a sincere manner, especially given that the families of victims are aging.

The Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly have adopted resolutions on the situation of human rights in the DPRK on many occasions. However, no progress has been made. Against this backdrop, Japan and the EU will jointly submit to this session of the Human Rights Council a resolution including the establishment of “new inquiry mechanism” on the human rights situation in the DPRK, based on the proposal and recommendation by High Commissioner Pillay and Special Rapporteur Marzuki Darusman. Broad support on this resolution by the international community would send a stronger message to the DPRK.

Mr. President,

Regarding the status of women, Japan is aware that further steps need to be taken. Japan has implemented various efforts towards the advancement of the status of women. Japan has incorporated the perspective of women in its ODA policy, implemented the assistance in line with that policy around the world, and made an impact on economic independence and the prevention of violence. We believe the year 2013 will be a year in which the importance of women’s issues will be emphasized. Japan will make proactive efforts for the advancement of the status of women including efforts in the areas of “women, peace and safety” and the elimination of violence against

women.

Mr. President,

The UPR is a meaningful mechanism through which each country is persuaded to improve its own human rights situation through dialogue with Member States and cooperation with the international community. The second UPR for Japan was held in October last year, and we had an opportunity to have constructive dialogues with all the States. We will make further efforts to improve the human rights situation in Japan as well as among the international community, while cooperating with the UPR.

Human rights treaties also play an extremely important role in every country. Japan is making sincere efforts for the effective implementation of the treaties we have concluded. Japan shall continue earnestly to address recommendations by human rights treaty bodies and suggestions from the international community, and thereby protect and promote all forms of human rights.

Mr. President,

There is no end of the road concerning the protection and promotion of human rights. The entire community of nations needs to make persistent and sustained efforts. Human rights are a matter of legitimate international concern, and the Human Rights Council is expected to play an important international role in this area. Japan has always attached importance to diplomacy based on universal values such as human rights and democracy. We have made positive contributions to the protection and promotion of human rights through such means as nation-building support and technical assistance. Japan is determined to deliver its utmost effort as a member of the Human Rights Council, with the aim of further contributing to the improvement of human rights situations around the world.

I thank you for your kind attention.