

## Japan's vision for a peaceful and healthier world

Health is fundamentally a global issue. Recent outbreaks of Ebola virus disease and Middle East respiratory syndrome have reminded us that global health issues require collective action. The world must unite and countries must establish resilient and sustainable health systems, ensuring that each individual is secure and receives the highest attainable standard of health. Japan has been a longstanding advocate of human security<sup>1</sup> and has taken concrete action on the ground in support of this principle. Human security protects the vital core of all human lives in a way that enhances freedom, fulfilment, and capabilities<sup>1,2</sup> and underlies Japan's policy of Proactive Contribution to Peace. Japan regards health as an indispensable element of human security.<sup>1</sup>

In September, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, which includes universal health coverage (UHC), to which Japan attached great importance during the negotiation process.<sup>3</sup> Achieving UHC requires comprehensive changes to systems, human resources, and public awareness. To catalyse such changes, leaders must commit to leave no one behind in the drive for the best attainable health gains. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have created an opportunity to connect sectors and empower individuals, families, and communities. It is crucial that we agree on a monitoring and evaluation framework so that the impact of UHC against investment is measurable and thus attainable.

Japan will host the first G7 Summit after the adoption of the SDGs in May, 2016. Alongside the G7 Health Minister's Meeting, and the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Japan will create an opportunity for countries and partners to discuss concrete steps towards achieving new goals, while sharing Japan's relevant experiences, so that we can move forward together with this new agenda.

Japan's global health priorities are to construct a global health architecture that can respond to public health crises and to build resilient and sustainable health systems. To realise these goals, Japan has endorsed two new global health strategies: the Basic Design for Peace and Health<sup>4</sup> and the Basic Guidelines for Strengthening Measures on Emerging Infectious Diseases.<sup>5</sup> I would like to underline the importance of these priorities and foster succinct and relevant discussions during our G7 presidency in 2016.

First, in preparation for the G7 Summit, we will discuss how to address the challenges of public health emergencies. The existing global health architecture must be restructured to ensure prompt and effective responses to public health emergencies. Public and private partners, government, and civil society—at global, regional, country, and community levels—should reach agreement on their respective roles in advance of emergencies. Japan expects WHO to have the lead role in prompt detection and containment, especially in the early stages of a public health emergency, while acknowledging WHO's need for further reform and capacity strengthening. Japan is ready to support this reform process, including the launch of the Contingency Fund for Emergencies.<sup>6</sup> Japan also fully supports the efforts of the World Bank's Pandemic Emergency Facility, and calls for coordination between WHO and the World Bank to ensure the two mechanisms have supplementary and complementary roles so that they increase efficiency and effectiveness in crises responses.

Second, we will discuss strategies to build resilient, sustainable national health systems. In the past 70 years, Japan's life expectancy increased by more than 30 years and, since the early 1980s, health outcomes have consistently been top ranked.<sup>7</sup> These achievements are the result of the establishment of universal health insurance in 1961, favourable proximal determinants of health, such as healthy diet and access to clean water,



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

Olivia Harris/Reuters/Corbis

and action on social determinants of health.<sup>7</sup> Assuring equitable access to quality basic health care in Japan improved population health outcomes and boosted economic growth, social stability, equity, justice, and solidarity.<sup>8</sup> Progress has been accomplished not only through socioeconomic development, but also through firm political will, even when countries have limited resources.<sup>9</sup> Examples can be seen in countries such as Kenya, where a Japanese official development assistance loan is supporting the attainment of UHC.<sup>10</sup>

In pursuit of resilient and sustainable health systems, the International Health Regulations (IHR) also have a role in reducing the risk of emergencies and minimising their potential damage. In this context, we support the Global Health Security Agenda as a concrete mechanism to strengthen core country capacity stipulated in the IHR. Japan is well aware of the importance of the fight against communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis, as well as addressing the challenge of antimicrobial resistance.<sup>11</sup> We reiterate the importance of the One Health approach in the fight against antimicrobial resistance, and of supporting countries to comply with the WHO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance,<sup>11</sup> as confirmed at the G7 Elmau Summit. Taking into account ever expanding global economic integration, especially in the Asia Pacific region, Japan is all the more responsible for addressing the threat of antimicrobial resistance as countries develop their own national action plans.

Moreover, Japan, the world's fastest-ageing society, is pioneering the response to the challenge of ageing by extending healthy life expectancy while maintaining a sustainable health system, on the basis of a life-course approach for all generations.<sup>4,12</sup> *Health Care 2035*, a report by an advisory panel to the Health Minister of Japan, proposed a new health system for 2035 with the goal to deliver unmatched health outcomes through care that is both sustainable and contributes to prosperity in Japan and around the world.<sup>13</sup>

In strengthening health systems, we cannot afford to overlook common assets, such as health information systems and drug supply chains established by disease-specific approaches. For this reason, Japan aims to bring together expertise and resources, including those from disease-specific approaches, from donor countries and international organisations, including WHO, the World Bank, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and

Malaria, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to support health-system strengthening in developing countries.

Japan has advocated for global health at previous summit meetings it hosted, including Kyushu-Okinawa in 2000 and Hokkaido-Toyako in 2008. Establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in 2002 was a direct outcome of Japan's leadership on infectious disease in Okinawa. We have also led global health innovation through the new Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development and the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund.<sup>14,15</sup> In addition, Japan has supported global resource mobilisation and private sector investment around poverty-related infectious disease, such as efforts towards polio eradication.

I reiterate that health issues are not purely the domestic concerns of individual countries. Health is a cross-border, global challenge. It is urgent that we all work to set up a framework for collaboration as soon as possible. At this crucial juncture for the future of global health, Japan will host an international conference, Universal Health Coverage in the New Development Era, on Dec 16, 2015, in Tokyo. In the lead-up to Japan's G7 presidency in 2016, this conference is expected to highlight global preparedness for health emergencies, as well as explore resilient and sustainable health systems under the SDGs. In a world more interconnected than ever before, leaders must strive to unite rather than divide, and enhance human security and peace through the pursuit of health and wellbeing for all. With the G7 presidency in 2016, Japan is determined to contribute further to galvanise renewed momentum for global health so that all people can receive the basic quality services they need, and are protected from health threats, without financial hardship. Through a series of meetings next year, I intend to prove Japan's firm commitment to a peaceful and healthier world.

*Shinzo Abe*

Office of the Prime Minister of Japan, Chiyoda-ku,  
Tokyo 100-0014, Japan  
ezoe-satoshi@mhlw.go.jp

I am the Prime Minister of Japan. I declare no competing interests.

- 1 Commission on Human Security. Human security now: protecting and empowering people. New York: Commission on Human Security, 2003.
- 2 Sen A. Development as freedom. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- 3 Shibuya K, Gilmour S. Civil registration as a means to promote human security. *Lancet* 2015; **386**: 14-15.
- 4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Basic design for peace and health. Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015. [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ic/ghp/page22\\_002274.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/ic/ghp/page22_002274.html) (accessed Nov 27, 2015).

- 5 Cabinet Office. Basic guidelines for strengthening measures on emerging infectious diseases. Tokyo: Cabinet Office, 2015. [https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kokusai\\_kansen/dai1/siryou1-2.pdf](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kokusai_kansen/dai1/siryou1-2.pdf) (accessed Nov 27, 2015).
- 6 WHO. The WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2015. [http://www.who.int/about/who\\_reform/emergency-capacities/contingency-fund.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/about/who_reform/emergency-capacities/contingency-fund.pdf?ua=1) (accessed Dec 4, 2015).
- 7 Ikeda N, Saito E, Kondo N, et al. What has made the population of Japan healthy? *Lancet* 2011; **378**: 1094–105.
- 8 The World Bank. Universal health coverage for inclusive and sustainable development. Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2014.
- 9 Summers LH, on behalf of 267 signatories. Economists' declaration on universal health coverage. *Lancet* 2015; **386**: 2112–23.
- 10 Japan International Cooperation Agency. Signing of loan agreement with Kenya. Tokyo: Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2015. [http://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/press/2015/150818\\_01.html](http://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/press/2015/150818_01.html) (accessed Nov 27, 2015).
- 11 WHO. Global action plan on antimicrobial resistance. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2015. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/193736/1/9789241509763\\_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/193736/1/9789241509763_eng.pdf?ua=1) (accessed Nov 27, 2015).
- 12 Miyata H, Ezoe S, Hori M, et al. Japan's vision for health care in 2035. *Lancet* 2015; **385**: 2549–50.
- 13 Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Health Care 2035. Tokyo: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2015. <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/seisakunitsuite/bunya/hokabunya/shakaihoshou/hokeniryoku2035/future/en/> (accessed Nov 27, 2015).
- 14 Nature. Japan. *Nature* 2015; **519**: S56–57.
- 15 Katsuno K, Burrows JN, Duncan K, et al. Hit and lead criteria in drug discovery for infectious diseases of the developing world. *Nat Rev Drug Discov* 2015; **14**: 751–58.