

**Statement by Mr. Joe Nakano  
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan  
At the High-Level Meeting on Happiness and Well-being:  
Defining a New Economic Paradigm**

**2 April 2012**

Miss Helen Clark, Administrator of UNDP and Chairperson of the High-Level Meeting,  
Her Excellency Ms. Laura Chinchilla, Honourable President of the Republic of Costa Rica,  
His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Y. Thinley, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan,  
Distinguished Delegates and Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to be given the opportunity to speak at this meeting on behalf of the Government of Japan under this beautiful spring sky of New York. I would like to commend Prime Minister Thinley and the Royal Government of Bhutan on their initiative to organize this important meeting. I am confident that under the able leadership of the Prime Minister and the Chair, we will have a fruitful exchange of views today.

Before I go into the main issue of today's meeting, on behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I would like to express once again our profound gratitude for the strong solidarity and warm support extended by the international community in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake last year. Reconstruction in Japan is making steady progress thanks to the generous support and words of encouragement received from the international community.

Madam Chair,

We all know that each individual feels happiness in his or her own

way. The primary role of government thus should be to develop an environment in which its citizens may pursue their own happiness. Until recently, most policy-makers, especially those in Japan, believed that increasing per capita GDP was the best way to bring happiness to their people.

However, last November, when the people in Japan welcomed Their Majesties the King and Queen of Bhutan to Japan, in what was indeed the first State Visit since the earthquake, His Majesty's message and philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) inspired so many Japanese. It reminded us of the importance of the bonds among people, referred to as "*kizuna*" in Japanese, and made us re-think what matters most in our lives. His Majesty's speech at our National Diet, by which I was immensely inspired, was quite moving and full of deep affection and solidarity towards the Japanese people. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for his visit to Fukushima, where he taught the meaning of GNH to school children there.

Madam Chair,

In fact, a number of recent studies have shown that, in many developed countries, including Japan, happiness is not proportional to economic wealth. This finding, often called the "Paradox of Happiness", has given rise to international discussion on how to enhance individual well-being through government policies.

The Government of Japan has been spearheading national and international efforts to find better, more innovative approaches to promoting people's well-being. Last December, a government commission published its study on well-being indicators and their policy implications. More than 130 well-being indicators were proposed, with a focus on bonds among families, local communities and nature. A panel under the Council on National Strategy and Policy is now following up the commission's findings in order to present visions and concrete measures for government policy-making.

Madam Chair,

The “happiness agenda” seems to be gaining importance in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. In our input to the Rio+20 Outcome Document, the Government of Japan proposed to consider happiness and well-being as new criteria in order to provide different perspectives from GDP. Japan has also been actively promoting “human security” as a main guiding principle of the international development strategy. Human security promotes well-being at the individual level through protection and empowerment of people and communities.

In December last year, Japan hosted the Asia-Pacific Conference on Measuring Well-being and Fostering the Progress of Societies in cooperation with the OECD, the Asian Development Bank and other relevant organizations. One hundred eighty participants from 32 countries shared their experiences and country initiatives on this issue. On that occasion, the importance of different cultural values in addressing the issue of happiness was widely recognized.

Madam Chair,

In order to achieve sustainable development, economic growth must be married happily with people’s well-being. At Rio+20, the leaders in the world are expected to agree to further develop indicators to measure progress towards sustainable development. We are confident that happiness and well-being can play an important part in this endeavor. When we succeed, the wisdom of GNH will become our best partner to guide economic activities and government policies, which have mainly been defined by GDP. We very much look forward to working with the Government of Bhutan and other Member States and stakeholders to realize a happier, greener world, building on our fruitful discussions at this high-level meeting.

Last but not least, I most sincerely wish for the happiness and well-being of all those who are present at this meeting.

I thank you for your attention.