

Statement by Japan's Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
Motome Takisawa at the High-Level Segment of the 34th Session of the
Human Rights Council, 28 February, 2017

Mr. President,

Your Excellency Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to have the opportunity to make a statement on human rights before the Human Rights Council on behalf of the Government of Japan at a time when the importance of human rights has never been higher.

I wish to express my gratitude and respect for the superb leadership of His Excellency Joaquin Alexander Maza Martelli, Permanent Representative of El Salvador, who holds the grave responsibility of the Presidency of the Human Rights Council. I wish to express my heartfelt respect for United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein for his continued and assiduous efforts. Mr. President and Your Excellency High Commissioner, Japan intends to continue to actively cooperate with the activities of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) under your leadership.

As of January this year, Japan once again became a member of the Human Rights Council. Our country conducts diplomacy that emphasizes universal values, such as freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and rule of law, and will engage ever more actively in collaboration for nation building, technical cooperation, and the like with the purpose of improving the human rights and humanitarian circumstances of the world.

Mr. President,

Violence during conflicts, suppression of the freedom of expression, massive numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), terrorism, and other serious human rights violations and humanitarian concerns exist worldwide, giving rise to an enormous number of challenges for the Human Rights Council.

[The Current State of Serious Human Rights Violations Worldwide]

Humanitarian crises including the rise of violent extremism are becoming protracted in the Middle East. Support for refugees, IDPs and their host countries, as well as for the stabilization of regions that have been liberated from terrorists is also urgently required with the progress in the global fight against terrorism. In Africa, there are mounting human rights and humanitarian issues that need to be addressed that stem from conflicts, violence, and natural disasters.

Such humanitarian crises have created more than 65 million refugees and IDPs worldwide, the most since the end of World War II. Frequent acts of terror also continue to challenge the international community, and must be firmly condemned.

Turning our eyes to Asia, although there is certain progress with the advancement of democracy and so on, there continue to exist issues regarding respect for freedom and basic human rights and the rule of law, such as the oppression of the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, etc. as well as the implementation of criminal punishments not based on law.

The issue of abductions by North Korea has yet to be resolved. The voices of concern within the international community regarding the systematic and widespread violation of human rights in North Korea have been growing since the publication of the report by the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 2014. It is a manifestation of these strong concerns that the Human Rights Council and the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted resolutions on the human rights situation in the DPRK by consensus, that the operative clause of UN Security Council resolution 2321 refers to the human rights and humanitarian issues in North Korea, and that the Security Council has held comprehensive discussions concerning the situation in North Korea including the human rights situation for three consecutive years.

Mr. President,

As a responsible member of the international community, Japan will actively extend assistance and cooperation in response to these serious human rights concerns.

[Assistance in the Middle East, Africa, etc.]

Concerning the Middle East, at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit last year, Japan announced that it would implement assistance totaling approximately six billion US dollars, including human resources development for approximately 20,000 people in the three years beginning in 2016 in order to prevent the expansion of violent extremism and build a “tolerant and stable society”. Japan has extended a total of more than 1.66 billion US dollars in humanitarian assistance to Syria, Iraq, and neighboring countries since the Syrian crisis began.

In Africa, Japan announced an assistance package that includes the implementation of human resources development for approximately 9.6 million people in the three years beginning in 2016 towards the creation of a peaceful and stable Africa, and is currently in the process of steadily implementing this assistance. Additionally, in the Peacekeeping Operations in South Sudan, approximately 350 members of the Self-Defense Forces are engaged in the development of infrastructure, assistance to IDPs, construction of UN facilities and the like.

In Asia, Japan has just decided to provide assistance to the northern part of Rakhine State in Myanmar to improve the humanitarian conditions of the residents and IDPs there.

[North Korea]

Concerning the human rights situation in North Korea, Japan has so far collaborated with the international community to strongly demand that North Korea heed with sincerity the voice of the international community and take concrete actions towards the early resolution of the abductions issue and cooperation with the international community. Japan will continue to fully support such efforts by the UN Special Rapporteur on the DPRK and the OHCHR Office in Seoul, and plans to co-table with the European Union a resolution on the situation of human rights in the DPRK to this session of the Human Rights Council. We look forward to support from the respective countries.

[Refugees]

Concerning the refugee issue, Japan places importance on providing development cooperation that contributes to address the root causes of refugee flow, along with humanitarian assistance, from the perspective that it is indispensable to give hope to refugees for the reconstruction in the future as well as to ease the burden on the

neighboring countries that host refugees. To this end, Japan announced at the last year's UN General Assembly assistance package of 2.8 billion US dollars aiming at supporting refugees as well as host countries and host communities, and has been steadily implementing assistance such as vocational training for refugees as well as assistance for host communities.

[Women]

On gender equality and empowerment of women, Japan has hosted WAW!, the World Assembly for Women, for three consecutive years with the cooperation of other countries, international organizations, and other parties as an important source of momentum towards the resolution of major issues concerning women and gender in the international community. Japan also intends to further strengthen collaboration with UN Women.

Japan has also supported the activities of the Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Japan will continue to work with the international community in tackling sexual violence in conflict.

[Leprosy]

Japan has also carried out its own initiative towards the elimination of discrimination against leprosy. Japan is taking the opportunity presented by the progress in the Human Rights Council to continue to vigorously undertake efforts with the aim of creating a world where there is no discrimination against leprosy.

[Conclusion]

Mr. President, Japan has always placed its trust in fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, respect for basic human rights, and rule of law. Making the concept of "Human Security" as one of the pillars of Japan's foreign policy, we have actively contributed to the protection and promotion of human rights in collaboration with the UN and other bodies of the international community. Japan has also engaged in human rights dialogues with more than 10 countries while placing emphasis on the ideals of dialogue and cooperation based on mutual understanding and respect.

Determined to participate even more actively in the discussions in the international community concerning the improvement of the human rights situation and respect for

basic human rights, Japan will have candidates stand for elections in June to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. Both candidates are experts in their respective fields that we in Japan are proud of, and we ask for your support for them.

We must create a society where women, children, persons with disabilities, displaced persons are able to live with dignity as human beings and with hope for the future without being tormented by the fear of violence and discrimination, want for clothing, food, and shelter, and the like.

As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, it is the intention of Japan to firmly play a leading role in the protection and promotion of human rights around the world through the Human Rights Council and elsewhere within the UN based on this strong determination.

Thank you for your kind attention.