

**Video Message by Minister KAMIKAWA Yoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the
“Side Event on the Substantive Preparations for the 15th Congress on Crime
Prevention and Criminal Justice in New York**

7 November 2023

Distinguished participants,

My name is KAMIKAWA Yoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. Allow me to begin by extending my deep gratitude to Her Excellency Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the UNODC, for her efforts to organize this “Side event on the substantive preparations for the 15th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice”.

Between 2014 and 2021, I served three times as Japan’s Minister of Justice, setting forward an initiative to instill in the international community the values of respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law, which are necessary to realize a world where all people can live safely and securely in a rule-based society.

In this context, in 2021, I was given the opportunity to chair the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Kyoto. Due to the unprecedented crisis posed by the pandemic, the preparations were extremely difficult. However, we eventually received a number of more than 5,600 participants from 152 countries and regions with a strong commitment to the rule of law and the advancement of international cooperation. I would like to thank all involved for the successful conclusion of the Kyoto Congress due to the close collaboration between the host country Japan, the UNODC, and the Member States. Quite recently in September, I was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, and in this capacity from now on, I will boost the rule of law in light of the achievements of the Kyoto Congress.

Enacting the Kyoto Declaration adopted at the Kyoto Congress will indeed contribute to the realization of a diverse and inclusive society in which no one is left behind, by promoting the rule of law and achieving the SDGs. Therefore, it is crucial for the international community to steadily implement the Kyoto Declaration, build on its results, and further advance activities to fortify crime prevention, criminal justice, and the rule of law. Today, I would like to highlight some essential initiatives that could be considered for the next Congress from this perspective.

The UNODC conducts various activities to promote the rule of law around the world, with a central focus on capacity building and technical assistance.

These activities strongly resonate with other initiatives, such as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, which Japan has raised as one of the most important diplomatic agendas.

Japan supports the UNODC's efforts to realize the Kyoto Declaration as well as the rule of law, including the Global Maritime Crime Program to enhance the maritime law enforcement capacity of coast guards and law enforcement agencies, border control in Ukraine to prevent human trafficking and firearms smuggling, and measures in Southeast Asia to fight cybercrime, such as ransomware and crypto assets, and terrorism and violent extremism. Consultations to promote the rule of law through norm-setting in the international community must continue, which should be encouraged through the Kyoto Congress's follow-up activities.

The first of these activities, a highly beneficial conference, is the Thematic Discussions of the CCPCJ on the Implementation of the Kyoto Declaration, held annually by the UNODC in Vienna.

Each year, this forum focuses on one of the four pillars of the Kyoto Declaration: Advancing crime prevention; Advancing the criminal justice system; Promoting the rule of law; and Promoting international cooperation and technical assistance to prevent and address all forms of crime. We hold substantial discussions with a large number of participants and share each country's progress in implementing one of the declaration's pillars.

The second activity is the "Global Youth Forum for a Culture of Lawfulness", which aims to empower young people who will lead the next generation. Japan will continue to emphasize the importance of this initiative after taking up the baton from Qatar, the 13th Congress host country.

We believe that we can build partnerships for the future through sincere discussions among youth from around the world with diverse values and backgrounds on contemporary issues

surrounding the rule of law and justice. The outcomes of the discussions were compiled into a recommendation, which was submitted to the Thematic Discussions of the CCPCJ, bringing youth voices to the world.

The third activity is developing the United Nations Model Strategies on Reducing Reoffending. Japan has been working to establish guidelines that will serve as a reference for legislation and policy-making in various countries. We will continue to be actively involved in the intergovernmental expert meeting scheduled to be held in 2024.

The fourth activity is the Asia Pacific Criminal Justice Forum, a network of criminal justice practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region. In collaboration with the UNODC, Japan provides a forum for criminal justice practitioners to deepen mutual understanding and trust and facilitates international cooperation in promoting the implementation of the UNTOC and improving the treatment of offenders in the region.

We must continue to ensure that promoting the rule of law does not remain mere words. As an important partner of the UNODC and related countries and organizations, Japan will continue its efforts to realize the rule of law in the domestic and international community steadily and firmly.

In addition, Japan will spare no effort to cooperate for the success of the next Congress, hosted by the United Arab Emirates.

Under the leadership of the UAE, we intend to work with the international community to ensure that the legacy of the Kyoto Congress is carried on so that the 15th Congress in 2026 further entrenches the rule of law.

Thank you.