

Opening Remarks by Foreign Minister KAMIKAWA Yoko at
the Symposium on "WPS + Innovation from the United
Nations"

(March 18, 2024)

1 Introduction

- I am honored to have this opportunity today to exchange views on WPS with Ms. Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women, Ambassador Brattested, Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN, Ms. Nakamitsu, UN Under-Secretary-General and Ms. Verveer, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.
- Japan places importance on the values and principles of the rule of law and human rights. Japan also promotes diplomacy to realize a safe and secure world where "human dignity" is protected, based on the SDGs principle of "leaving no one behind".
- WPS, which is the theme of today's discussion, embodies these ideas. Japanese diplomacy is vigorously promoting WPS. Needless to say, collaboration with the UN is essential in such efforts.

2 WPS + Innovation

- Since assuming the office of Foreign Minister last September, I have been stressing the importance of WPS on various occasions.
- In addition, under the title of "WPS + Innovation," I have held a series of dialogues with various stakeholders.
- Today's meeting in New York, the birthplace of WPS, is the fourth of such meetings. After almost a quarter of a century since the adoption of Resolution 1325, I am keenly aware of the need to bring innovation to WPS and elevate it to the next level.
- Today, I am looking forward to hearing the frank views of yours who have been on the front lines of UN operations or promoting WPS globally, and deepen the discussion with key questions such as:
 - What are the challenges in promoting WPS further?
 - What are the new areas or opportunities for WPS?
- To that end, I would like to explain first about Japan's initiatives on WPS.

3 Background and Importance of promoting WPS

- The first occasion that I became aware of issues like those of WPS was in 1995. I visited the disaster area immediately after the Great Hanshin-Awaji

Earthquake and heard that sexual violence was increasing due to a lack of gender sensitivity and that anxiety was hindering women's recovery and reconstruction activities.

- On the other hand, when I visited the area affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, I learned that the recovery and reconstruction teams with the direct participation of women achieved higher results.
- The same applies to international situations. In light of current uncertainties, I think that the WPS perspective is becoming even more important.

4 Japan's Efforts on WPS

- With this notion, Japan intends to give shape to the concept of "WPS in Action" and link it to concrete initiatives.
- For example, I visited Ukraine as my first destination this year and conveyed directly to President Zelenskyy and others that Japan will continue to strongly support Ukraine.
- I also directly heard myself the voices of great concern from women and children in Ukraine and Poland who are suffering from the conflict.

- Through these exchanges, I was convinced of the importance of "reintegration" of separated families, communities, and the people of Ukraine.
- On February 19, at the Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction, I hosted a "WPS Session". I expressed in the session that Japan will continue to support the country's recovery and reconstruction taking into account WPS perspectives.
- Specifically, Japan continues to support Ukraine in partnership with UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF and other organizations to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable groups such as women and children, while fostering the leadership of women in reconstruction and investing in future leaders through education.
- In addition, to promote peacebuilding in the Middle East and Africa, Japan provides not only short-term assistance, but medium- and long-term support utilizing Japan's knowledge of disaster recovery and advanced technologies.
- Since Japan is prone to natural disasters, our efforts to promote WPS is characterized by applying WPS in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).
- With natural disasters occurring frequently around the world, it is extremely important to incorporate

the WPS agenda into DRR. Japan would like to contribute to this area as well.

5 Conclusion

- In the following panel discussion, we look forward to hearing your frank opinions and suggestions to innovate WPS. Thank you very much.