

Statement by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio
at the Leaders' Plenary of the Third Summit for Democracy

I would like to pay tribute to the government of the Republic of Korea for hosting the third Summit for Democracy and to President Yun for chairing this Leaders' Plenary.

Democratic institutions and forms of democracy vary from country to country and time to time, and we are still searching for how democracy should be.

Democracy should be diverse. However, we must not lose sight of its essence.

It should be equipped with legal mechanisms that respect the will of the majority and at the same time defend the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and minorities. Equality before the law to guarantee those rights and freedoms, and free and fair elections, are also crucial aspects.

Japan reiterates the importance of democratic principles and the underlying spirit of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise.

Furthermore, we also need to address challenges to these principles in the online information space that new technologies opened up to us.

The development of the Internet and social media platforms has given human beings access to a wide variety of information and avenues for expression.

Information that was once limited in access is now instantly available from a smartphone in your hand.

On the other hand, such developments have also made it easy to express and disseminate slanders and insults to others, and discriminatory speech and behavior directed at people of a certain ethnic or national origin, broadly referred to as "hate speech".

This could result in exchanges of accusations and silencing of people's voice, creating divisions in society and preventing healthy debate and discussion, which is essential for democracy.

We need a stronger response.

As free and fair elections are the foundation of democracy, it is essential that voters are able to make decisions of their own free will based on necessary and sufficient information in an environment where the freedom of expression is guaranteed.

However, there is a risk of AI-generated deep fakes and spoofed audio making it difficult to distinguish between true and false information, and hindering people's political self-determination, and thereby destabilizing and disrupting society.

To address these risks, Japan is also advancing discussion on technologies against dis- and misinformation by AI at the AI Strategy Council.

In addition, we are also looking into comprehensive measures in areas such as addressing how digital platform operators should respond to the challenges and how to improve digital media literacy among the general public.

The spread of disinformation is a challenge common to all countries and requires common understanding and collaboration at the international level.

Japan launched the Hiroshima AI Process last year as the G7 Presidency and led the discussion on generative AI.

The process successfully formulated the international guiding principles and code of conduct.

Going forward, this initiative could be expanded beyond the G7.

Last October, in order to share knowledge on measures against disinformation in the region, Japan also held the Internet Governance Forum for the first time as a host country.

During the Forum, measures against dis- and misinformation were discussed, and a document called the Existing Practices against Disinformation was published, which compiles good practices of countermeasures against disinformation taken in many countries.

We will continue to work with the international community to defend universal values, including democracy, while enjoying the benefits of technology.

Thank you for your attention.