

(Provisional Translation)
Address by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio
at the Seventy-Ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly
(Delivered by H.E. Ambassador YAMAZAKI Kazuyuki
on behalf of the Prime Minister)

Mr. President,

Allow me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. KISHIDA Fumio.

1. Introduction:

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The world stands at a historical inflection point. These extreme shifts in history have become distinctive features of the past three years and will continue to define the years to come. I have stressed that, at times like these, we must overcome divisions and confrontations and promote international cooperation by going back to the basic foundations. In 2022, I have called for defending “the principles of the UN Charter and the rule of law,” and in 2023, multilateralism with the United Nations at its core, by shedding a light on “human dignity.”

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine still rages on, and we are witnessing a dire situation in Palestine and Gaza. Unfortunately, divisions and confrontations are deepening. In these difficult times, Japan's position remains unwavering: We should go back to the basic foundations to unite the international community and deepen solidarity. The “rule of law” and “human dignity” remain the key to international cooperation.

Today, I would like to highlight the importance of strengthening governance at both national and international levels as another foundation for uniting the international community to strengthen the "rule of law" and protect "human dignity."

At the Summit of the Future, we made a commitment to take action for the benefit of present and future generations. Building inclusive societies across the international community, where youth, future generations and women can thrive, and achieving the SDGs, leaving no one behind, are overarching goals that resonate with us. We believe the international community would also agree that the role of governance is critical in achieving these goals. Such “empathy” among us provides a common ground for all members of the international community to share and fulfill their responsibilities.

My message for this year can be summarized in a simple phrase: "Inclusive governance with shared responsibility".

2. Inclusive governance with shared responsibility

Mr. President,

To address unprecedented crises and challenges, and to protect and strengthen “the rule of law” and “human dignity,” Japan, as a member of the international community, is determined to play a role for stronger governance.

(1) First and foremost, we must strengthen governance to work towards international peace and security, which is the foundation for a prosperous society.

Next year marks the 80th anniversary of the United Nations. It is time to transform the United Nations to address the most pressing challenges in peace and security and meet the needs of a new era.

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, which has continued for more than two and a half years, poses a blatant challenge to the international order based on the rule of law and shakes its very foundations. There are a host of issues that need to be addressed, including North Korea’s nuclear and missile development, the situation in Gaza, and conflict and terrorism in Africa.

The international community is in need of a United Nations, in particular, a Security Council, that is credible and carries out its responsibility effectively.

At the Summit of the Future, world leaders issued a clear and strong message on the urgent need to reform the Security Council. In order to respond in good faith, it is essential to begin the development of a consolidated reform model and text-based negotiations as soon as possible. In this regard, it should be underscored that the majority of member states, including the African Group, are calling for the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council.

Japan will work with others to achieve a Security Council that is more representative with developing countries included and effective, reflecting the realities of the international community.

Japan also attaches great importance to the role of the General Assembly in the area of international peace and security.

For the sake of future generations, it is necessary to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the “rule of law” and to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the world.

It is with this conviction that I have promoted a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). The vision of FOIP is in line with the goals of the United Nations. Japan will continue to expand our circle of partners who share this vision, and together we will address various challenges facing the international community in a spirit of co-creation.

Strengthening domestic governance is also essential for international peace, security and prosperity. Japan has continued to spearhead human-centered international cooperation, based on the concept of human security.

We need to accelerate the efforts of the international community as a whole towards achieving the SDGs.

It is also vital to address the root causes of conflict by interlinking humanitarian, development and peace efforts in order to curb the deterioration of humanitarian situations due to protracted conflicts.

In March this year, during Japan's presidency of the Security Council, Japan held the open debate on peacebuilding and conflict prevention. We should strengthen the functions of the Peacebuilding Commission, which has a unique convening power, and increase its cooperation with the Security Council to further promote the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus).

In promoting these initiatives, the perspectives of women, youth and rural areas must be taken into account.

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda seeks to achieve sustainable peace through women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding and disaster recovery processes. When there is governance that enables women's active participation, the WPS agenda becomes even more meaningful.

In order to build this type of inclusive society, it is important to nurture the future generation so that they can take a lead in various initiatives. To this end, Japan plans to launch a programme to nurture the next generation of leaders in the field of gender. In order to achieve a flexible and resilient future society that is rich in diversity and able to respond to new challenges, Japan will work on promoting youth, supporting research and building networks for young researchers, and holding a forum for the next generation.

Rural perspective is also important. Japan is trying to utilize the remarkable technology of companies in rural areas, including active, long-established companies and start-ups, to promote projects that can contribute to solving social issues and create a robust virtuous cycle in both the economies of rural areas and overseas.

Domestic governance is the bedrock of sustainable development, as it underpins countries' ability to mobilize private investment and domestic financing. At the same time, each country achieving “sustainable growth” would amount to the sustainability of the international community as a whole, a process which would then be supported by international governance. The focus should therefore be on governance at all levels.

(2) Second, we should all share the responsibilities for responding to new challenges facing the international community, and work together with a new approach.

I'd like to start by addressing the challenge of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation--my lifelong work as a politician hailing from Hiroshima. Secretary-General Guterres puts this challenge as the very first recommendation in his "New Agenda for Peace," launched last year. Despite the extended efforts of the international community, the world is now on the cusp of a reversal in the decreasing trend of the global number of nuclear arsenals. We must face up to the situation that nuclear weapons are once again becoming an apparent global risk due to changing geopolitical circumstances and deepening divisions and confrontations in the international community.

With these serious concerns in mind, I have been steadily taking nuclear disarmament initiatives under the “Hiroshima Action Plan” to strengthen realistic and practical efforts to realize a world without nuclear weapons. In March this year, as the President of the Security Council, Japan chaired the Ministerial Meeting of the Security Council on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.” Following this effort, on the 23rd of this month, I hosted the High-Level Meeting to launch the Friends of FMCT here in New York.

Next year marks 80 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan will further strengthen efforts to promote accurate understanding on the realities of nuclear weapons use as the starting point for all nuclear disarmament measures. Japan will also act to further advance nuclear disarmament as we head toward the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

Japan will also work even more closely with the international community towards the denuclearization of North Korea, including full implementation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Japan will continue to seek to normalize its relationship with North Korea, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, through comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern, such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, as well as settlement of the unfortunate past.

The rapid development of emerging technologies is bringing new challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Focusing on the further development of emerging technologies, Japan intends to actively and constructively participate in international rule-making on lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) through balanced discussions, taking into account humanitarian and security perspectives, so that a common understanding can be reached among the international community, including stakeholder states.

In discussing new challenges, we must also include aspects of digital technologies, especially considering that the Global Digital Compact was just adopted at the Summit of the Future. Digital technologies have the power to transform the future of the world, thereby making digital cooperation an essential part of protecting and enhancing human dignity.

Among such digital technologies, there is an urgent need to establish international governance on artificial intelligence in order to maximize the opportunities brought by AI while mitigating its risks. Japan has been working through the Hiroshima AI Process to achieve safe, secure, and trustworthy AI. We will continue to actively contribute to the discussions on AI at the United Nations.

In tackling global issues, the evolution of Multilateral Development Banks has emerged as a new issue. Japan will contribute to further progress in the MDB evolution in a way that reflects the specificities of each institution and the discussions of their boards.

Increasing lending capacity to developing countries through utilizing existing capital and private capital mobilization, and addressing debt restructuring faced by those countries are also pressing issues. Transparent and fair development finance, in line with international rules and standards, is needed now more than ever.

Climate change is a common challenge to all humankind and a critical issue that the international community collectively needs to address. Japan has identified climate change as the greatest challenge that needs to be overcome by bringing about a “New Form of Capitalism.” We are steadily taking actions and are on track to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

It is important that all countries come together to achieve the common goal of net-zero through various pathways that are compatible with economic growth and energy security.

As an initiative to embody these ideas, Japan has proposed the concept of the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC). We are working with other Asian countries to simultaneously achieve decarbonization, economic growth and energy security in the region.

(3) What I would like to highlight this year is the importance of 'inclusive governance upheld by shared responsibility.' This requires solidarity among diverse countries.

At last year's G7 Hiroshima Summit, I set the strengthening of engagement with partners beyond the G7 as one of the pillars of the Summit.

Since then, Japan has been supporting stronger domestic governance in developing countries to “protect human dignity” through the exchanging of opinions with ASEAN, India, Pacific countries as well as with Latin American countries, including Brazil, which holds the G20 presidency this year.

Africa is a region that is experiencing dynamic growth, supported by a young population and the fruits of its efforts to strengthen their inclusive governance. At the same time, Africa continues to face challenges related to human dignity, such as poverty, job creation and fragile economic and social infrastructures, as well as challenges related to peace and stability, such as conflict, terrorism, and refugees and displaced persons.

Strengthening governance is important as a lever for change to achieve peace, stability and sustainable development. Investing in human resources and mobilizing domestic and international resources for this purpose are essential for economic transformation that leads to growth.

As a long-standing partner of Africa, Japan has been supporting the strengthening of ecosystems and governance conducive to domestic and international resource mobilization, including through assistance for fiscal management and trade facilitation.

Japan has also supported elections to consolidate and strengthen democracy, and assisted in the capacity-building of administrative and judicial personnel. Furthermore, we have promoted inter-community dialogue to foster a shared future, encouraged the participation of citizens, including youth and women, in the political and reconstruction process, and supported the strengthening of their livelihoods.

Next year, we will host TICAD 9 in Yokohama. Together with our African friends and the United Nations, we will find innovative solutions to Africa's and global challenges.

As a part of these efforts, Japan will consider further preferential measures in light of the WTO decision so that least developed countries can achieve smooth and sustainable development after their graduation from the LDC Category.

3. Conclusion:

Mr. President,

At this year's UN General Assembly, let us all look towards the same vision for our future and join forces to strengthen governance across the international community. Let us work together for inclusive societies where the rule of law and human dignity are upheld.

The United Nations has an important role to play, and the international community is counting on it to fulfill its mandate. As a member state of the United Nations, Japan will also contribute to this progress.

Thank you for your attention.