

Statement by Mr. ONISHI Yohei,
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs,
at the High-Level Segment of the 61st Session of the Human Rights
Council
25 February 2026

Mr. President,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is my great honor to have this opportunity to deliver a statement on behalf of the Government of Japan.

Mr. President,

Today, many people across the globe, including in Ukraine, Myanmar, and Sudan, are facing dire human rights circumstances.

The international order based on fundamental values and principles, such as freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law, is being profoundly challenged. The international community must unite to send a clear message that we stand behind this order and will act to protect and uphold it.

Mr. President,

The protection of human rights is the basic responsibility of all nations. It is essential that the international community continue dialogue and cooperation with a view to fulfilling this responsibility.

Japan has promoted bilateral human rights dialogues and supported the efforts of other countries.

Cambodia is a case in point. Japan has engaged in the Japan-Cambodia Human Rights Dialogue and has submitted a series of resolutions on the human rights situation in the country. In this way, we have continuously facilitated Cambodia's own efforts in this area. All of these resolutions have been adopted by consensus, including the most recent one adopted last October. We hope to see Cambodia further promoting efforts toward improving its human rights situation.

Japan has also submitted a series of resolutions on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. There is a long history of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy, and the fight against such discrimination remains ongoing. We will continue to work with the international community to eliminate such discrimination and prejudice.

This year, Japan has contributed approximately 3.6 million USD in total to OHCHR to support projects for the protection of human rights in Syria, Palestine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Moldova, among others.

Protection of women's rights is also crucially important. To promote women's economic empowerment, Japan contributed approximately 13 million USD in 2025 to UN Women to support its work in this area. We also support the activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Japan will continue to cooperate closely with international organizations, including OHCHR, to contribute to international efforts to promote and protect human rights.

Mr. President,

While pursuing “dialogue” and “cooperation,” the international community should speak out firmly against serious human rights violations.

The issue of abductions by North Korea must be resolved without delay as an urgent humanitarian matter. This issue relates to the sanctity of human life, and no time can be spared in resolving it, given the aging of the abductees and their families. Japan will continue to strongly urge North Korea to let the abduction victims return to their homes immediately. We will do so in close cooperation with the international community, including through “the resolutions on the situation of human rights in the DPRK.”

Freedom, respect for human rights, and the rule of law must also be protected in China, including in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet. Japan is deeply concerned about the human rights situation in China, and reiterates its position of strongly urging China to take constructive and concrete actions.

Regarding the protests in Iran since the end of last year, Japan opposes any use of force against peaceful protests and calls for the protection of the fundamental rights of its citizens, including the right to freedom of expression, and the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, without fear of reprisal.

We have serious concerns about the continuing grave human rights and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. Japan will contribute to improving this situation in Gaza and to rebuilding the Gaza Strip by undertaking "efforts for sustaining peace" through various forms of assistance.

Mr. President,

Japan is also taking human rights-related initiatives domestically.

Last December, we revised Japan's National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights with the aim of promoting respect for human rights more effectively in the context of business activities.

Through the implementation and promotion of the revised NAP, Japan will promote responsible business conduct. In this way, we will enhance our efforts toward the promotion and protection of human rights across society as a whole, including within the international community, and toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. President,

Improvement of the global human rights situation cannot be achieved overnight. Japan, as a member of the Human Rights Council, will continue to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Thank you for your attention.