

Statement by Mr. Takashi Uto,
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,
High-level Segment of the 25th Session of
the UN Human Rights Council
March 2, 2015, Geneva

Mr. President,
Mr. High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it a great honor for me to have the opportunity to make a statement on behalf of the Japanese Government in the Human Rights Council.

Japan supports His Excellency Ambassador Joachim Rucker as President of the Human Rights Council, which is a role of heavy responsibility given the numerous issues facing the Council, for his pursuit of efficient management and effective use of the Council. Japan would like to cooperate in building a system which will enable the Human Rights Council to adequately focus on the truly necessary issues under the outstanding leadership of the President. We would also like to pay tribute to Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, since last September and his office which are energetically conducting its operations in the world.

Mr. President,

Despite these efforts, there exist various severe human rights situations in many parts of the world which need to be addressed by the Human Rights Council and OHCHR. First, I would like to mention that the lives of many innocent citizens have been lost around the world in acts of terrorism perpetrated by extremist groups. January and February this year, ISIL announced that they executed two Japanese nationals. Such inhumane and despicable acts of terrorism, which ignore human rights and humanity, are outrageous and impermissible; and I condemn them absolutely.

At the same time, I have strong concerns about the situation in Syria in which ISIL is expanding as a hotbed of serious violations of human rights. The violence must stop now

through political dialogues to stem the tide of extremism. Japan shall continue to make its maximum diplomatic efforts to this end, together with the Council and the international community.

Furthermore, I would like to make reference to the acts of terrorism in Paris in January and in Denmark in February. These incidents are despicable acts of terrorism, and I would express condemnation of any violence seeking to limit freedom of expression and the press in the strongest terms. Japan supports freedom of the press as a base of democracy and considers that journalists should not be punished arbitrarily for articles which they have written.

Mr. President,

Thus far, the international community has continued to express serious concerns about the human rights situation in North Korea. The report presented to the Human Rights Council last year by the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in the DPRK describes in detail the human rights situation in North Korea. Following the Human Rights Council in March last year, the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK was adopted with broad support of the international community at the UN General Assembly in December. After the adoption of the resolution, the UN Security Council, for the first time, adopted “the situation in the DPRK” as an agenda and discussed it comprehensively, including the human rights situation in North Korea. These movements indicate the concern of the international community. We strongly hope that North Korea will take concrete steps to improve its human rights situation by sincerely responding to these voices of the international community.

In the current session of the Council, Japan plans to co-table with the EU the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK, which includes language to welcome the aforementioned discussion at the UN Security Council and also the establishment of the field-based structure to ensure accountability of the human rights violations in North Korea. We would like to ask your understanding and support for the Resolution in order to send a strong message to North Korea with broad support from the international community.

Mr. President,

Japan is extending active humanitarian assistance to improve the situations of the

most vulnerable, such as children, women and Internally Displaced People in eastern Ukraine where a worsening situation is feared. Japan strongly hopes that an actual cease-fire will be secured and that the human rights situation can be ameliorated through improvement in the circumstances based on the agreement reached in Minsk on February 12. It is our strong wish that all parties concerned fully observe international law and the cease-fire agreement with self-restraint and responsibility, and, at the same time, work to ensure the security of the residents of eastern Ukraine.

Japan also supports the efforts towards national reconciliation being made by the new government of President Sirisena in Sri Lanka, which began this January. At the same time, we welcome that the constructive dialogue is being had between Sri Lanka and OHCHR and expect that such actions will lead to genuine national reconciliation, a goal towards which Japan will give as much cooperation as possible. As for Myanmar, Japan shall continue to support the country to achieve further improvement of the human rights situation from the view of realizing peace between the government and ethnic minorities, democratic transition and establishing the rule of law, not only through relevant assistance cooperation but by all appropriate means, including the Japan-Myanmar human rights dialogue which took place last month.

Mr. President,

Japan has been actively working towards realization of “a society in which women shine,” one in which women can shine by fully exercising their individual potential. We made a promise to execute ODA in excess of US\$ 3 billion over 3 years starting in 2013 to support women in developing countries, and we have already paid US\$ 1.8 billion in assistance in the first year. We also increased our contribution to UN Women by about 5 times last year and intend to liaise even more closely with UN Women by using its Tokyo Office which is scheduled to open as a base point. Last year, we hosted “WAW! Tokyo 2014 (World Assembly for Women in Tokyo)” with the participation of about 100 top leaders in women’s issues from in and outside Japan, and we plan to host it again this year.

This year marks exactly the 20th year since the 4th World Conference on Women was held in Beijing and the 30th year since Japan concluded the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, the reality remains that the human rights of some people in the world are violated only due to the

fact that they are women. Japan plans to liaise closely with international organizations including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the global community in order to make the 21st century free of human rights violations against women. I myself will announce Japan's successful achievements in the protection of women's human rights over the past 20 years at the Commission on the Status of Women, which is slated to start next week in New York.

Japan has also been taking international initiatives in efforts to eliminate discrimination against those affected by leprosy and their family members. We shall endeavor to seek ways to positively follow up on the state of implementation of the "principles and guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members," which were noted with appreciation in resolutions Japan previously submitted to the Human Rights Council and to the United Nations General Assembly and were adopted unanimously in 2010..

Mr. President,

In light of the current world situation, I believe that it would be meaningful for us to return to the principles of the United Nations upon the 70th anniversary of its founding. It goes without saying that "protection and promotion of human rights" is one of the 3 pillars of the United Nations' activities along with "peace" and "security and development". Japan has attached great importance to date to universal values such as freedom, democracy, fundamental human rights and the rule of law, and has also actively contributed to the protection and promotion of human rights in the international community. On the other hand, there are still socially vulnerable people in the world whose human rights are being threatened. Japan shall continue to further strengthen its relationship with the United Nations including the Human Rights Council with a view to advancing human rights diplomacy in the future. I hope that the current session of the Human Rights Council will reaffirm its capacity to take action to further promote and protect human rights worldwide.

Thank you for your kind attention.