

Statement by His Excellency, Mr. Shinzo Abe
Prime Minister of Japan
(Delivered by H.E. Mr. Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare,
on behalf of the Prime Minister Abe)
“Global Health Crises: Implementing Lessons Learned”
Side Event to the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 19 September 2016

Your Excellency, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,
Your Excellency, Prime Minister Solberg,
Dr. Gerd Müller, (Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany)
Dr. Margaret Chan, (Director-General of the WHO)
Honorable Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Heads of International Organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Evening

To begin, please let me express my deepest gratitude for your attendance tonight at this event, “Global Health Crises: Implementing Lessons Learned.” Health is the foundation of a country and its people’s prosperity and peace. It is my pleasure and honor to hold this event with my co-hosts who share this conviction.

Today, the world is facing the challenge of health emergencies. The Ebola virus disease claimed the lives of many people, brought great humanitarian and financial damage to the effected countries in Western Africa and their neighbors and cast a dark shadow of fear upon the entire world.

There was a Japanese nurse named Junko Otaki, who faced the life-or-death situations of numerous patients while working in an Ebola treatment center in Sierra Leone as a member of Doctors without Borders. Nurse Otaki recounted her experiences there, in particular her shock when she saw the countless graves of the victims of the disease, and her observation of the deep trauma of the experience of Ebola on the survivors and the families who lost their loved ones. We should never let such a tragedy happen again.

As globalization continues to progress around the world, infectious diseases that might spread beyond borders pose an ever-imminent threat. This is exemplified by the Zika virus outbreak in Latin America and the yellow fever outbreak in Africa. The influence of such

international outbreaks spreads beyond the affected regions. Furthermore, the threats of conflict and natural disaster impinge greatly on the health and well-being of people as well.

Mitigating the impacts of public health emergencies to a minimum, preparing for potential threats and strengthening emergency responsiveness are absolutely imperative to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which the international community, including we, the world's leader, agreed under the principle that "no one will be left behind."

Based on this understanding, at the G7 Summit held in May this year, the G7 leaders declared our commitments and laid out the path to proactively solve the world's health issues in the "G7 Ise-Shima Vision for Global Health".

One of the most important pillars of the "Ise-Shima Vision" is the strengthening of the Global Health Architecture, which is a mission cast upon the whole global community.

Dr. Margaret Chan,

I would like to reiterate Japan's support for the "One WHO Approach", which is part of the WHO's emergency response reform.

Moreover, we welcome the progress in refining and strengthening the WHO's coordination arrangement as was requested by the G7 leaders at the Ise-Shima Summit, in order to fully capitalize on the WHO's expertise and coordinate with humanitarian assistance organizations such as UNOCHA in times of health crises.

We also hope that the WHO will play a significant role in supporting the capacity building and strengthening of countries.

During the Ebola response, prompt and timely funding was one of many challenges. The World Bank's Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF) is a funding mechanism which enables such a response in a complementary manner to the WHO's Contingency Fund for Emergencies. Japan has led the world in expressing financial contributions to PEF.

Japan will continue to contribute to further strengthening the world's capacity to respond to global public health emergencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Standing on the viewpoint of human security, I have dedicated myself to the promotion of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The achievement of UHC through health systems strengthening is not only a key to solving a vast range of health issues that people face, but it also contributes to the prevention and preparedness against future emergencies.

Last month, the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, for the first time on African soil. There, I announced Japan's commitment to assist key countries, which have become pioneers in the field of UHC, to share and implement their good practices and become models for other African countries, and spread UHC throughout the continent. Furthermore, alongside the World Bank and other organizations, we introduced "UHC in Africa", which presents helpful pathways and actions towards the achievement of UHC under the ownership of African countries. Reflecting on Japan's efforts, the World Bank is now considering support for developing countries toward the prevention and preparedness for health crises.

A year ago, here at the United Nations, I mentioned the need to enhance cooperation among the international organizations, donor countries and other relevant stakeholders toward health systems strengthening in developing countries by bringing together respective expertise. This awareness has now bloomed as the "International Health Partnership for UHC2030" platform, and cooperation among various organizations such as the WHO and the Global Fund are being strengthened. Japan strongly supports this initiative.

Finally, Japan puts great importance on human resources development. Strengthening global capacity for public health emergency responsiveness and promoting UHC at the national and regional levels are only possible when there are competent human resources for policy making and implementation.

When Dr. Ibrahim El-Gohary, a pathologist from Egypt, participated in a medical training program on infectious disease response in Japan, he was strongly moved by the knowledge and technology he was able to gain and wished to pass on what he had learned to other developing countries. Dr. El-Gohary's passion led to the launch of Japanese training programs abroad, and today, some 650 medical professionals from around the world have carried Japan's medical knowledge back to their homes in Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

Hand-in-hand with the honorable guests present here today; I wish to continue taking initiative and leading efforts to solve the world's global health challenges.

Thank you for listening.

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