

Statement by Mr. Shunsuke Takei
Parliamentary Vice–Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
At the United Nations Security Council Open Debate
On the Protection of Civilians and Healthcare in Armed Conflict
May 25, 2017

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Foreign Minister Nino Novoa, for your Presidency, and thank you for holding this open debate. It also is my pleasure to see Secretary-General António Guterres again after the London Somalia Conference two weeks ago. I would also like to thank Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of ICRC and Mr. Bruno Stagno Ugarte, Deputy Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, for their insightful briefings.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict, including healthcare in armed conflict, is an imperative that requires the united efforts and courage of the international community.

Japan is honored to have assumed the important role, together with the other co-penholders, in drafting Security Council Resolution 2286. In order to push the realization of the principles of this resolution, Japan has urged all parties to conflicts to take the former Secretary-General's recommendations under resolution 2286 seriously. However, despite the unanimous adoption of this landmark resolution last year, and against our hope, attacks on medical personnel and facilities have continued in many parts of the world, especially in Syria and Yemen. Japan associates itself with the statements to be delivered later by Spain on behalf of the co-penholders of resolution 2286 and by Switzerland on behalf of the "Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict".

Mr. President,

Against this backdrop, I would like to express my appreciation for the dedicated efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to produce his informative report. Allow me to comment on his vision for the protection of civilians and healthcare in the armed conflict.

Japan fully supports the Secretary-General's vision to enhance respect for international law, and believes that raising awareness, provided under Recommendation 7 of the former Secretary-General's recommendations, would be the first step. In this regard, Japan has recently revitalized our National Committee on International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In addition, Japan has also participated actively in the multilateral discussions of the intergovernmental process on Strengthening the Respect for IHL in Geneva.

As the SG report indicates, conflict prevention is the best way to avoid attacks and threats against civilians and medical personnel. Japan, placing great importance on the concept of Human Security, and aiming to contribute to “sustaining peace”, has been making various efforts in the field of peace-building to prevent the outbreak and recurrence of conflict, including by contributing 48.5 million US dollars to the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and leading the discussion on institution building at the Peacebuilding Commission.

Now let me briefly touch upon the issue of forced displacement, refugees and internal displaced persons (IDPs) which is also an important element in the context of the protection of civilians in the armed conflict along with the issue of healthcare. At the G7 Hiroshima Foreign Minister’s Meeting last year, Foreign Minister, Mr. Fumio Kishida, stressed the importance of the G7 countries utilizing their respective strengths and proceeding with initiatives related to terrorism and the refugee crisis in a manner that is mutually complimentary and that generates synergistic effects. Furthermore, starting from tomorrow, the issue of refugees and displaced persons will be discussed at the G7 Summit in Taormina, Italy. Japan will continue to work proactively on this issue.

Mr. President,

One of the main factors behind the failure to prevent recurrences of attacks against medical personnel and medical facilities is the lack of accountability. While underlining the Security Council’s active role in fact-finding and ensuring accountability, Japan emphasizes the important role of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC), with a view to ensuring respect and compliance with international humanitarian law. Japan will continue to contribute to the Commission both financially and by nominating the most qualified and independent members.

Mr. President,

The protection of healthcare in armed conflict should be a priority for the international community among the various issues related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. As a member of the Security Council, Japan strongly condemns all attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and is fully committed to realizing the principles of Resolution 2286. We will continue to work closely with the other Member States, the United Nations system, and civil societies and international humanitarian organizations to contribute to this matter.

I thank you, Mr. President.