

**Consideration of the Report Submitted by Japan under Article 29(1) of the Convention  
for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**

**Opening statement by H.E. Yoshifumi OKAMURA,  
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Madame Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the occasion of the consideration of the Report submitted by Japan for the first time, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, I would like to give honor to the tireless efforts by the Committee to solve the issue of enforced disappearance.

Just one year ago, I was here in Geneva as the head of the Japanese delegation for our Universal Periodic Review session, where I demonstrated Japan's proactive efforts as well as its follow-up of the prior recommendations. It is my great pleasure to visit here again for this opportunity to have a constructive dialogue on Japan's efforts on implementing the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

At the outset, let me emphasize something of great importance. Since the conclusion of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by Japan, no criminal conduct with the involvement of the Government of Japan that comprises of all three constitutive elements of an enforced disappearance as defined under Article 2 of the Convention has been committed under Japanese control. As details are provided in the report of Japan and the replies to the List of Issues, platforms to punish acts of enforced disappearance as well as to prevent such cases are already in place in Japan's legislative system. Today, before engaging in a constructive dialogue with the distinguished members of the Committee, the Government of Japan would like to reaffirm our commitment to ensure that no cases of enforced disappearance will ever happen in Japan.

Enforced disappearance is an extremely serious violation of human rights. Regrettably, there have been reported cases of enforced disappearance all over the world. Although Japan does not have any case of enforced disappearance with the involvement of the Government of Japan, it has experienced cases of the abductions of its nationals, which forms one type of enforced disappearance. With this experience, Japan thoroughly understands the sufferings of the victims. The abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea are a matter of grave concern pertaining to the sovereignty of Japan as well as the lives and safety of

Japanese citizens. At the same time, as a violation of fundamental human rights, the abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea are a universal issue for the international community. The Government of Japan has identified that 17 Japanese citizens were abducted by North Korea around the 1970s and the 1980s. However, only five abductees have returned to Japan and the rest have not yet returned home. At the Seventy-Third Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Abe reiterated his determination in his speech to solve this issue, stating “we will bring about the return of all Japanese abductees”.

In order to universalize the criminalization of enforced disappearance including abductions, it is indispensable to gain understanding and cooperation among the international community. The Government of Japan recognizes that the Convention is beneficial in affirming in the international community that enforced disappearance is a crime and perpetrators should be punished, and it is also important for preventing recurrence of such crimes in the future. In addition, the Convention is significant in arousing international attention to the issue of enforced disappearance, including abductions. With that recognition, Japan signed the Convention on 6 February 2007, becoming the first state in the Asia-Pacific region to do so. After its signature, the Convention was discussed in the House of Representatives on 12 May 2009 and in the House of Councillors on 10 June of the same year. Both Houses unanimously approved the ratification of the Convention. Based on such broad support, Japan deposited the instrument of ratification of the Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 23 July 2009. Japan takes pride in being a State Party to this Convention since its entry into force. It is also our great honor to have an opportunity to participate in the consideration of the report before this distinguished Committee. Japan looks forward to engaging in constructive dialogue with the distinguished members of the Committee today and tomorrow.

Japan is fully aware that the Committee made its commitment in 2017 to double the number of States Parties to the Convention within five years. Indeed, increasing the number of States Parties is a pressing issue. The Government of Japan is making steadfast efforts to promote the universal ratification of the Convention. For instance, Japan is active in conducting outreach activities to encourage non-State Parties, especially in the Asia-Pacific, to conclude the Convention, including by making recommendations at UPRsessions. Moreover, in February this year, Japan co-sponsored the International Seminar on Enforced Disappearances in Strasbourg, which was hosted by *Fondation René Cassin* together with the Council of Europe. Dr. Suela Janina, Chairperson of the Committee, Professor Emmanuel Decaux, member of the Committee, and Professor Kimio Yakushiji, former member of the Committee, participated in this seminar as panelists and there were many attendees from diplomatic missions, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, academia and the press. Taking this opportunity, Mr. Takamasa Sato, Consul-General of Japan in Strasbourg, renewed Japan’s

support for the Committee's commitment. The Government of Japan will take various initiatives to promote ratification of the Convention by non-States Parties.

Furthermore, there has been a Japanese member on the Committee since its inauguration. Professor Kimio Yakushiji of Ritsumeikan University made a significant contribution to the work of the committee for six years from 2012 to 2017. Since 2017, Professor Koji Teraya of the Graduate School of the University of Tokyo has also served as a member. Although they are independent from the Government, the fact that members from Japan are contributing to the activities of the Committee based on their rich expertise and experience in the area of international human rights law is of great value to Japan, as a country tirelessly promoting human rights diplomacy.

Last but not least, the Government of Japan provided voluntary contributions amounting to 100 million Japanese yen to OHCHR for supporting initiatives on the protection of people from enforced disappearance in 2017. Japan hopes that our contributions will be effectively utilized for the activities of the Committee towards universalization of the Convention.

Madame Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Japan is keen to lead discussions in the international community on prevention and solution of the issue of enforced disappearance. The Japanese delegation is ready to provide answers with the utmost sincerity on any matters of concern you may have during this important constructive dialogue. We look forward to fruitful discussions today and tomorrow.

Thank you very much.