

Statement by Mr. Norikazu Suzuki,
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the 75th Session of the United Nations Economic
and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
May 27, 2019

Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first express my heartfelt welcome to Ms. Alisjahbana on her appointment as Executive Secretary of the UN ESCAP last September and congratulate the convening of this 75th session of the UN ESCAP.

The theme of this session, “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, is an important factor that we should keep in mind to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is based on the spirit of “no one left behind”.

The Asia-Pacific region has achieved remarkable economic growth, but on the other hand, growing inequalities within and among countries of the region is pointed out. Therefore, each country needs to seriously consider how to tackle issues raised by the theme of this session.

In 2016, Japan established the SDGs Promotion Headquarters led by the Prime Minister to achieve a sustainable, diverse and inclusive society where “no one will be left behind”, and has been implementing various measures domestically and internationally.

This year, in addition to the annual HLPF for Sustainable Development under ECOSOC auspices, the quadrennial HLPF under UN General Assembly auspices will also convene. Taking advantage of these follow-up opportunities, Japan would like to continue to contribute towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Disaster risk reduction is an area where inclusion, the theme of this session, has particular importance. In this area, at any stage from preparation to emergency response or recovery and reconstruction, it is necessary to consider inclusiveness, which takes into account the needs of each of those who are affected the most by disasters, such as persons with disabilities, children, elderly people, and women.

This afternoon, Japan, the ESCAP and the UNDRR jointly organized a side event related to disaster risk reduction. As I emphasized there, "mainstreaming disaster risk reduction" and "prior investment in disaster risk reduction" are the important factors.

In Japan, natural disasters occur frequently. For example, my hometown, Yamagata

Prefecture, was hit by record rainfalls last August, which caused landslides and floods. This is one of the reasons why Japan, making the most of its experience, has been promoting disaster risk reduction efforts with countries all over the world. The aim is to achieve international agendas such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, including promotion of “World Tsunami Awareness Day” on November 5.

Japan has implemented projects such as “Strengthening multi-hazard risk assessment and early warning systems in Pacific island countries” in cooperation with the ESCAP. Also, Japan is supporting efforts toward the reconstruction of the Central Sulawesi Province in Indonesia, which was severely damaged by the earthquake and tsunami last September.

Furthermore, the Asia-Pacific region is frequently hit by typhoons. Consequently, Japan has been supporting the activities of the Typhoon Committee established by the ESCAP and the WMO from its establishment in 1978 and would like to contribute proactively to the activities to reduce water related disasters in the Asia-Pacific region.

This year is a milestone year for achieving the SDGs. For Japan, it is also the year when a new era “Reiwa”, which means beautiful harmony, has begun.

Japan will actively work together with ESCAP Secretariat and Member States so that the sustainable societies where “no one will be left behind” will be achieved with beautiful harmony in the Asia-Pacific region.

Thank you for your attention.