

STATEMENT BY JAPAN
AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE 75th SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

- THEMATIC DEBATE: OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION -
OCTOBER 22, 2020, NEW YORK

Japan remains fully committed to multilateral efforts for arms control, disarmament, and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in order to achieve global and regional peace and stability. The use of such weapons must not be permitted under any circumstances and thus Japan reiterates the importance of reinforcing the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions and other relevant regimes.

The international community has made significant progress in preventing the re-emergence and proliferation of chemical weapons under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). However, the repeated use of chemical weapons has become a serious and urgent issue in recent years. The international community must be united in condemning the use of these weapons and perpetrators should be identified and held accountable.

In this regard, Japan welcomes reports issued by the Fact Finding Mission (FFM) and the Identification and Investigation Team (IIT). Their investigative work is essential to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of chemical weapons and identify its perpetrators in Syria. Japan commends their professional, impartial and independent work and to assist related activities of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in the country, Japan contributed to the Trust Fund for Syria Missions at the OPCW this year. In addition, Japan welcomes the adoption of the decision related to the first report of the IIT during the 94th session of the Executive Council which requires Syria to fulfill its accountability and will continue to collaborate with other States Parties to the CWC to deal with the actual use of chemical weapons and deter its further use.

The increased threat posed by non-State actors, including by terrorists, is of particular concern and we must prevent chemical weapons and toxic chemicals from falling into their hands. In order to address this challenge, we should work to strengthen the OPCW to maximize its efficiency and encourage the States Parties to implement their national

measures. Japan commends ongoing efforts by the Technical Secretariat for this purpose even during the Covid-19 pandemic and will also provide assistance to the countries in need and actively take part in discussions to promote the national implementation of the CWC.

Japan commits itself to the destruction of the abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) as an obligation under the CWC and have invested an enormous financial resources, amounting to approximately 2.6 billion euros from Japan's own account to cover all the related costs for its operation. Although the destruction project entails various challenges and uncertainties, Japan has been making consistent progress with successful destruction of about 58,000 ACW items among 84,000 recovered. Although the project has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with the constructive bilateral cooperation and coordination with China, Japan continues to make every effort to advance this unprecedented and difficult project.

It is imperative to recognize that the Covid-19 pandemic has significant relevance to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The pandemic demonstrates the potential of biological weapons to cause detrimental impact on a global scale, and hence may inspire interests in creating biological weapons. To reinforce international prohibition against biological weapons, Japan believes that in the last year of the intersessional programme of the BWC, States Parties should discuss in a cooperative and constructive manner the possible measures to strengthen the BWC and work toward producing concrete outcomes at the 9th Review Conference in 2021. Potential means to strengthen the BWC include the science and technology review process, the improvement of confidence building measures, the mechanism and procedure of the provision of support to states endangered by treaty violation and others. To achieve such outcomes, the meetings of experts scheduled in December this year are of particular importance, and Japan is chairing one of the meetings to facilitate the convergence of views in the field of science and technology review process.

In order to demonstrate commitment to international cooperation and to reinforce the BWC regime, Japan has undertaken a number of initiatives in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the BWC Implementation Support Unit (ISU). In the past a few years, Japan organized capacity-building workshops in Asia to enhance preparedness for and response to the use of biological weapons, and thematic seminars in Geneva to promote dialogue on this topic. Additionally, the online

training course to promote national implementation of the BWC was successfully held in September of this year, inviting BWC national contact points in Asia. Japan will continue to organize more international cooperation projects of this kind and hope that many States Parties to the BWC will participate in and take advantage of our initiatives.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism for investigating the alleged use of biological and chemical weapons (UNSGM) is also an important pillar to verify and prevent their use and proliferation. It is also the only available tool to investigate in the case of biological attacks and thus Japan joins call for building stronger capacity to conduct investigation of any alleged use of biological weapons, which was mentioned in the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament.

Japan also underlines the importance of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which provides the international community with a basis to tackle the threat of WMD proliferation posed by non-state actors. Japan contributed approximately 1 million dollars to the UNODA to promote its implementation, and part of the contribution was utilized for the launch of the Online Training Course on UNSCR 1540. Japan will continue to support the implementation of the Resolution, beyond the next comprehensive review to be adopted in 2021.

Lastly, while these multilateral institutions are indispensable in realizing our common goal of a world free of weapons of mass destruction, it has recently become more difficult to overcome a divergence of opinion and seek common ground in major challenges. Japan emphasizes the need for effort and cooperation between stakeholders to strive towards a common understanding and take effective actions.

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