

State Foreign Minister UTO's Video message at a special event of the Kyoto Congress
celebrating International Women's Day

March 8, 2021

Her Excellency Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of UNODC,
Dear participants,
Good morning.

I am Uto Takashi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

It is my honor to convey a message on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to the Kyoto Crime Congress Special Event, celebrating International Women's Day, produced by UNODC.

COVID-19 has heavily impacted women and girls. Due to the pandemic, domestic and sexual violence has become ever more serious. Women and girls who are in difficult economic situations are more likely to be involved in various crimes, including trafficking in persons.

Moreover, it is said that people has become more easily influenced by violent thoughts and claims under the coronavirus pandemic. In Asia, terrorist organizations are inciting people to terrorism through the internet, and thus, we are concerned that COVID-19 pandemic presents recruitment and operational opportunities to them.

I would like to point out that the importance of women's empowerment has been increasing under this situation. Last September, the Government of Japan and UNODC reconfirmed to cooperate to mainstream gender equality as well as to counter terrorism and violent extremism. We have been contributing to women's empowerment as well as the stability in the region through funding projects of UNODC, which support, inter alia, the improvement of women's living in Afghanistan and the reintegration in Indonesia.

Humankind can turn this crisis to an opportunity for improvement. Last April, UN Secretary-General António Guterres asked us to "put women and girls at the center of efforts to recover from COVID-19." The Government of Japan has been working in cooperation with UNODC based on a concept of "human security" in which all life and dignity should be respected and build a better society where "no one is left behind."

Thank you very much for your attention.