

# **Japan's Human Rights Commitments and Pledges**

February 2023

## **1. JAPAN'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES**

Upholding the highest standards of human rights enshrined and guaranteed in its Constitution, Japan has consolidated its democratic political system and developed policies for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as universal values. Based on the belief that protecting human rights is a fundamental responsibility of any nation, while speaking out firmly against serious violations of human rights, Japan takes the basic principles of “dialogue” and “cooperation” and promotes voluntary efforts through bilateral dialogues and cooperation between countries that are working toward democratization and the protection of human rights, in addition to proactively participating in international forums such as the United Nations (UN). Japan is committed to continuing to actively contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world in collaboration with the international community, including the UN and civil society. The appointment of the first Advisor to the Prime Minister for International Human Rights Affairs in November 2021 also attests to this determination.

## **2. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND PLEDGES FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **2.1 Conclusion of international human rights instruments and their continued sincere implementation**

Japan has concluded the major international human rights instruments and is committed to their sincere and appropriate implementation, including the submission of periodical reports and dialogue with each treaty body.

Japan has also concluded and faithfully observed the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols I and II, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1980 Hague Convention (Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction). Furthermore, in April 2020, the Amended Act for Implementation of the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Implementation Act) was brought into force. In July 2022, Japan concluded the Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labor (No. 105).

Japan will continue to appropriately follow up on the recommendations from each treaty body in order to bolster its cooperation with each body and its commitments pertaining to the implementation of each instrument. Japan also intends to continue to contribute members to the human rights treaty bodies.

In addition, Japan recognizes the importance of various activities by civil society. Based on

that recognition, Japan holds meetings with the public and with non-governmental organizations, and listens to their opinions and reflects them in its periodic reports. Japan attaches great importance to dialogues with civil society and will continue to hold them.

## **2.2 Continuous contribution and active participation in the Human Rights Council**

Japan has actively engaged in the activities of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in order to improve the human rights situations of various countries and regions and find solutions to related issues. Japan served as a Member State of the HRC from its establishment in 2006 until 2011 and again from 2013 to 2015, from 2017 to 2019, and most recently from 2020 to 2022 for its fifth term. During each period, as a Member State, Japan has actively contributed to the HRC's discussions and to the adoption of key resolutions, thereby shaping the opinion of the international community pertaining to human rights issues.

Japan has been cooperating with the EU in adopting resolutions on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and is making efforts to raise international awareness in order to improve the situation of human rights in the DPRK, including in regard to the abductions issue. With the adoption of these resolutions, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been extended.

Japan has served as penholder for the resolutions on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia and has continuously supported the efforts of the Cambodian Government to improve the human rights situation on the ground. In 2021, a resolution to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia was adopted.

Japan has been leading the adoption of the resolutions on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy and their Family Members. In this connection, Japan contributed to the unanimous adoption in 2020 of the resolution to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy and their Family Members.

Japan also attaches great importance to meaningful and constructive dialogue with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Special Procedures, to which Japan will continue to offer its cooperation.

Furthermore, Japan has actively contributed to the activities of the HRC, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In preparation for the UPR in January 2023, which marks the start of the fourth cycle, Japan submitted its national report after engaging in exchanges with civil society and NGOs in 2022.

## **2.3 Continuous contribution to the work of the UN General Assembly and other forums**

Japan is actively advancing its efforts in various fields, such as women's empowerment, child protection, global health, and water and sanitation, while exercising its leadership in the UN General Assembly and other forums in order to realize the concept of human security.

### **2.3.1 Women's empowerment**

Japan has taken the lead in discussions on women's empowerment. At the 2019 G20 Osaka Summit, Japan made women's empowerment one of the main agendas and committed to: (1) promoting women's participation in the labor market; (2) supporting girls' education, including STEM education; and (3) reflecting the voices of female business leaders, including women entrepreneurs. At the meetings of the G7, Japan has actively participated in discussions on accelerating gender mainstreaming. Japan continues to advance discussions on women's participation among the G7, and has already announced its plans to hold a Ministerial Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment under the Japanese presidency in 2023.

In addition, in April 2022, Japan attended the UN Women Donor Roundtable and demonstrated its proactive support for women and girls through its collaboration with UN Women. At the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Japan actively participated in the discussions on gender equality in the context of policies and programs on climate change, the environment, and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Furthermore, since 2014, Japan has hosted the World Assembly for Women (WAW!), inviting top leaders in diverse fields from Japan and abroad to make proposals for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. The fifth WAW! was held in 2019 in collaboration with Women20 (W20), one of the G20 engagement groups, with approximately 3,000 participants over two days. At WAW!2022, held in December 2022, discussions were held on how to create a better society where gender equality is achieved, given that existing gender inequalities have been exacerbated internationally due to the prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and social instability triggered by the situation in Ukraine among other factors. In addition, Japan held webinars on gender equality and women's empowerment in 2021 and 2022.

### **2.3.2 Children**

As a board member and pathfinder country of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (GPeVAC), Japan has led efforts in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and relevant NGOs aimed at ending violence against children (target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)). In 2021, Japan formulated its National Action Plan to End Violence Against Children, which aims to contribute to the achievement of Target 16.2 of the SDGs. Japan will continue promoting efforts to end violence against children both at home and abroad, in collaboration with the international community.

### **2.3.3 Women, peace and security**

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council from January 2023, Japan will continue to contribute to the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda and the promotion of the protection of civilians in the Security Council, including in particular the agendas of sexual violence in conflict and children and armed conflict. Japan has formulated and implemented

its National Action Plan on WPS, and in 2021, provided financial assistance of approximately 900,000 U.S. dollars to the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) to support online victims of gender-based violence in the Middle East, including Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, Japan provided countermeasures against COVID-19 and legal assistance for female victims of sexual violence in the DRC. Japan is also actively contributing to support for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and contributed an additional two million euros to the Global Survivors Fund, a global fund for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in 2022, bringing its contribution to date to a total of six million euros.

## **2.4 Development cooperation**

In February 2015, Japan established its Development Cooperation Charter. Taking the concept of human security as a guiding principle, the Charter outlines Japan's commitment to provide cooperation by protecting and enhancing the capabilities of each person, focusing in particular on vulnerable people, as a basic guideline. Based on this principle, Japan is continuing to contribute to efforts to improve human rights situations through concrete initiatives, including the actions described below.

### **2.4.1 Initiatives aimed at achieving the SDGs**

In July 2021, four years after its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2017, Japan presented its second VNR on progress toward the SDGs at the UN High-Level Political Forum Ministerial Segment. On this occasion, Japan shared with the international community its efforts to achieve the SDGs, including the realization of universal health coverage (UHC) and addressing climate change, via a video message from Foreign Minister Motegi. In September 2021, Prime Minister Suga participated via video message in the SDG Moment 2021, held in conjunction with the UN High Level Week. In the process of conducting the VNR, Japan took several initiatives, including an exchange of views with the private sector members of the SDGs Promotion Roundtable and civil society, as well as a call for public comments. Through these initiatives, Japan was able to obtain recommendations on the need to develop comprehensive and objective goals, science-based targets, and indicators for the achievement of the SDGs in Japan. This process led to the strengthening of collaboration with all stakeholders. In addition, each year since December 2017, Japan's SDGs Promotion Headquarters—headed by the Prime Minister and composed of all cabinet ministers as members—has formulated Japan's SDGs Action Plan in order to accelerate the government's concrete efforts toward achieving the SDGs. This annual plan includes priority issues and specific measures to accelerate concrete government initiatives. In December 2021, for example, Japan formulated its SDGs Action Plan 2022. The plan outlined the basic policy for the future achievement of the SDGs, and the initiatives to be taken by government ministries and agencies in 2022. The total amount of expenditure required to carry out the plan came to approximately 7.2 trillion yen. The plan was formulated with a view to making as much progress as possible ahead of 2023, considering at the time of planning that Japan would assume the G7 Presidency this year and that the UN would be holding major milestone meetings on the SDGs, such as the SDG Summit and the UNGA High-Level Meeting on UHC.

### **2.4.2 COVID-19 pandemic**

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Japan has provided approximately five billion U.S. dollars in assistance to developing countries, based on the principle of leaving no one's health behind. In particular, as part of efforts to ensure equitable access to vaccines, including through a financial contribution of up to 1.5 billion U.S. dollars for COVAX, Japan has shown leadership beyond financial assistance by, for example, co-hosting the COVAX AMC Summit with Gavi in 2021. In addition to assistance in the form of supplies, including vaccine donations, Japan has been implementing "Last One Mile Support" since 2020, making it the first country in the world to do so. Japan's contribution in this area includes providing support equating to a total of 18.5 billion yen for the improvement of equipment necessary for cold chains and strengthening vaccine administration capacity in 78 countries/regions. Japan is also looking ahead to a time after the pandemic subsides to assist developing countries in their economic and social revitalization and the resumption of cross-border travel. With this in mind, Japan is currently rolling out up to 10.8 billion yen in assistance, primarily to the Indo-Pacific region.

### **2.4.3 Global health (including nutrition)**

Japan has been leading the discussions on global health, and consistently taking the initiative to achieve UHC worldwide. In 2019, Japan took the lead for the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on UHC including the release of its political declaration. In response to the spread of COVID-19, since the outbreak began Japan has provided approximately five billion U.S. dollars in assistance to developing countries, both through bilateral assistance and international organizations. In its Global Health Strategy formulated in May 2022, Japan confirmed its intention to take the continued leadership in the field of global health, including UHC. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in 2023 as well, Japan will make global health one of the important agendas and contribute to realizing a society where "no one is left behind." In addition, Japan hosted the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in December 2021, based on the notion that improvement of nutritional situations is related not only to the health sector but also to many other sectors, such as agriculture, distribution, water and sanitation, and gender, and that it is important to improve nutrition with multisectoral cooperation. The Tokyo N4G Summit surpassed the achievements of past nutrition summits, as it led to the announcement of a total nutrition-related financial contribution of over 27 billion U.S. dollars from stakeholders worldwide. This amount includes nutrition-related assistance announced by Prime Minister Kishida, which will amount to over 300 billion Japanese yen, or the equivalent of more than approximately 2.8 billion U.S. dollars.

### **2.4.4 Water and sanitation**

In April 2022, Japan hosted the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit and announced the Kumamoto Initiative for Water, which includes Japan's commitment to provide financial assistance worth approximately 500 billion yen over the next five years. The initiative aims to reduce flooding and greenhouse gases through the development of infrastructure such as dams and sewage systems, utilizing digitalization and innovation through collaboration between the public and private sectors. At the same time, the initiative aims to promote improvements in water supply

and sanitation facilities. Based on the Kumamoto Initiative for Water and as the top donor in the water sector, Japan will lead related efforts to realize quality infrastructure development from the governance, financial, and scientific/technological perspectives, while sharing with other countries the wealth of knowledge and technology it has accumulated through its past experiences.

#### **2.4.5 Women's empowerment**

In regard to areas related to women's empowerment, based on the Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment formulated in May 2016, Japan is making efforts to promote the advancement of women in developing countries. These include initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment, livelihood and life improvements for women, and eradication of violence against women. At the WAW!/W20 held in March 2020, Prime Minister Abe announced that at least four million women in developing countries would be provided with opportunities for quality education and human resource development over the three years from 2018 to 2020, and Japan steadily implemented this project. WAW! 2022 was held in December 2022 under the main theme of "Mainstreaming Gender into a New Form of Capitalism," with participants exchanging opinions on how to create a better society that sees gender equality achieved.

#### **2.4.6 Education**

In the education field, under the Learning Strategy for Peace and Growth, Japan has promoted educational cooperation for inclusive and equitable quality learning, and human resource development for industrial science and technology. In July 2021, at the Global Education Summit, Japan announced that it would provide more than 1.5 billion U.S. dollars in education support over five years until 2025, and also support education and human resource development for 7.5 million girls in developing countries.

#### **2.4.7 Labor and employment**

In the area of labor, as a member of the ILO (International Labour Organization) Governing Body, Japan actively engages in discussions with delegates representing workers and employers on global labor issues at the International Labour Conference and meetings of the Governing Body, among other forums. In addition, Japan has provided development assistance to countries in the Asia Pacific region and the African region through voluntary contributions to the ILO and support to networks of international workers' and employers' organizations. This includes assistance for urgent employment creation to address the impacts of natural disasters and COVID-19, for the development of labor laws and social insurance systems, and for improvement of occupational health and safety standards.

#### **2.4.8 Refugee assistance**

Considering the urgent need for international burden- and responsibility-sharing for supporting refugees, Japan joined the Global Compact on Refugees and provides assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons through collaboration with international organizations and other means. In addition, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) among other partners, Japan is making efforts to promote the humanitarian-development nexus to support the self-reliance of refugees, and to assist host communities.

Japan is actively collaborating with and contributing to the activities of relevant international organizations that lead the promotion and protection of human rights (e.g. OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women). Japan will continue to support these international organizations.

### **2.5 Promotion of bilateral dialogues**

Recognizing the importance of dialogue and cooperation based upon the principles of mutual understanding and respect, Japan has held regular bilateral dialogues and consultations on human rights with the EU and countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia and Iran. Japan will continue to hold interactive dialogues on human rights with various countries and strive to contribute to each country’s efforts to solve human rights issues through the sharing of best practices.

## **3. PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN JAPAN**

Japan is fulfilling the obligations stipulated in the international human rights instruments to which it is a party. All of Japan’s relevant ministries and agencies have engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights in various fields. Japan will continue to hold dialogues with civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to promote and protect the human rights of all people, including the young and the elderly, women and men, and persons with disabilities and children, in the aim of realizing a society where all people can exercise their abilities and find their lives worth living.

### **3.1 Gender equality**

Japan places high-priority on the realization of “a Society in which All Women Shine,” where all women can fully demonstrate their individuality and abilities according to their own wishes. With this in mind, since the year 2000, Japan has been formulating a five-year plan called the Basic Plan for Gender Equality. Japan is currently working to increase women’s participation in all fields, including politics, the economy, and public administration, based on the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality formulated in December 2020. In this way, Japan has been making continuous efforts to promote gender equality, including by annually setting policy priorities for women’s empowerment and gender equality.

### **3.2 Children**

In September 2022, Japan formulated a policy package titled Further Promotion of Child Abuse Prevention Measures, and is working to strengthen measures to prevent child abuse. Japan has also been comprehensively promoting various measures, such as protection of child victims, to address sexual exploitation of children based on the Basic Plan on Measures against

Child Sexual Exploitation of 2022, formulated in May 2022, and other policy documents. Furthermore, in June 2022, the Child Welfare Act was amended to strengthen the system for providing comprehensive support to families with children.

### **3.3 Persons with disabilities**

In line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Japan has been implementing measures to support the independence and social participation of persons with disabilities in a comprehensive and coordinated way. In May 2021, Japan amended the Act for Eliminating Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities, which came into force in 2016, to make the provision of reasonable accommodation by businesses obligatory. Japan will continue to promote measures for persons with disabilities to realize an inclusive society. In August 2022, the first periodic report of the Government of Japan was examined by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Japan explained its activities.

### **3.4 Business and Human Rights**

Japan supports the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and in 2020, formulated its National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP). By following this plan since, Japan has been steadily achieving its aim of ensuring steady implementation of the guiding principles. In 2021, an Inter-Ministerial Committee for Japan's NAP was established under the leadership of the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for International Human Rights Issues to accelerate cross-ministerial efforts in this area. In addition, in the summer of 2022, Guidelines on Respecting Human Rights in Responsible Supply Chains were formulated for businesses operating in Japan. Japan will continue to promote these cross-industry guidelines going forward.

### **3.5 Trafficking in persons**

Japan recognizes that trafficking in persons is a serious violation of human rights and a serious crime that often crosses national borders. As such, Japan considers it to be an urgent and common issue that the international community must address. Japan has been utilizing the Handbook on Measures against Trafficking in Persons, which was revised in February 2022, to facilitate investigations among other purposes. In addition, Japan has been strengthening cooperation with relevant foreign agencies, international organizations, and NGOs, while working together closely with relevant domestic agencies. Japan will continue to take such actions to prevent and eliminate trafficking in persons, as well as to promote appropriate protection of victims. Furthermore, based on Japan's 2022 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, revised in December 2022, Japan will continue to make efforts to implement comprehensive and inclusive measures against trafficking in persons.



### **3.6 Diversity in Society (Ainu people, LGBTQ+ persons and non-Japanese nationals, among others)**

The Act on Promotion of Measures for Realization of a Society in which the Pride of the Ainu People is Respected, which came into effect in May 2019, states that the Ainu people are indigenous people and establishes basic principles regarding prohibition of discrimination against the Ainu people. In addition, Japan formulated a basic policy, which includes coverage of human rights related issues, for the comprehensive and effective promotion of the measures set out in the Act. Japan is actively using this policy to promote the measures stipulated in the Act.

In order to address prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Japan is working on measures aimed at workplaces and schools. These include preparing and disseminating a collection of case studies of efforts by companies to address issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and providing consultation services at local labor bureaus. They also include preparing and publicizing awareness-raising documents for teachers and school staff. In addition, Japan provides human rights counseling on various human rights issues, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, at legal affairs bureaus nationwide and conducts various activities to raise awareness on these issues.

Japan is making efforts to eliminate such discrimination based on the Hate Speech Elimination Act, which declares that unfair discriminatory speech and behavior against persons with countries of origin other than Japan cannot be tolerated.

In addition, Japan is working to enhance its response to non-Japanese nationals who seek human rights counseling, including by increasing the number of languages available to 82 at some legal affairs bureaus.

### **3.7 Technical Intern Training Program**

In November 2017, the Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees was brought into force. Japan has taken measures to prohibit human rights violations by supervising organizations and implementing organizations and has offered consultation and reporting services for technical intern trainees. Furthermore, in February 2022, Japan revised the Operational Guidelines for the Technical Intern Training Program, which sets out necessary measures to be taken by supervising organizations and implementing organizations and is making efforts to ensure that human rights violations are swiftly and reliably addressed when they are identified. In addition, as the program is now due for review according to the provision of the Act, the entire government is going to accelerate relevant discussions, including on measures to prevent human rights violations.

### **3.8 Refugee Recognition System**

Japan has been working on initiatives to further optimize the operation of its refugee recognition system, including clarifying normative elements regarding eligibility for refugee status, improving the capacity of refugee inquirers, and enriching the content of country of origin information. The Immigration Services Agency and UNHCR exchanged a memorandum of cooperation in July 2021 and Japan is working to accelerate these efforts.