

Keynote Speech by H.E. Ms. KAMIKAWA Yoko,
Foreign Minister of Japan
at the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference
of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and
the Pacific (ESCAP)
Bangkok, Thailand, November 15, 2023

Distinguished participants,

I would like to congratulate all of you on the occasion of the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference and to express my gratitude to UNESCAP and UNFPA for hosting it.

Last November, the world's population reached the milestone of 8 billion. Population issues affect every aspect of human, social, and economic development, and they are directly linked to the way a society functions. They therefore cut across all the objectives of the SDGs, and it is critical to adopt perspectives on population and development in our efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Since the last regional Population Conference held in 2013, the Asia-Pacific has seen significant progress in social and economic development, including on matters linked to health and gender equality.

Indeed, the Government of Japan has been working hard on both domestic and international fronts. Just as an example, Japan has confronted the challenges of low fertility and population aging that are progressing at a dramatic pace across the Asia-Pacific region. Under these circumstances, Japan has been delivering on further extending healthy life expectancy to cope with the aging of its population. To address low fertility, we are stepping up measures to encourage marriage and are providing even greater support as regards pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing.

Having said that, pandemics like COVID-19 and the intensifying severity of climate change have affected people's basic livelihoods and set back some of the gains previously made.

In particular, refugees and other vulnerable populations are facing greater difficulties in accessing lifelines such as water, sanitation and hygiene, food and electricity due to multiple natural disasters and conflicts. This situation is having a significant demographic impact.

I would like to express my support for ESCAP's efforts to deepen the discussion from this larger perspective, including the issue of migrant demographics, and to further strengthen dialogue and capacity building, starting with this conference.

In order to deal with these rapid changes, it is necessary to adhere to a basic perspective which embraces various relevant policies. At the core of this viewpoint is the notion of “human security”. Japan defines “human security” as the guiding principle for development cooperation and has taken the leading role in promoting it in the international community. In other words, it is important to realize “A World Caring for Human Dignity,” where vulnerable people can live safely and securely.

In addition, the most basic condition for realizing “human security” is “universal health coverage”, which amounts to support for human life itself and includes strengthening healthcare systems and infectious disease control. Japan has long been at the forefront of mainstreaming UHC.

Through promoting these measures in alignment with our vision for human security as well as UHC and looking toward the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development in 2024, Japan is keen to contribute further to discussions and international cooperation on demographic diversity.

Thank you.