

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health

Statement of Japan

Geneva, 27 May 2013

Thank you, Mr. President,

Japan would like to express its appreciation for the dedicated efforts of the Special Rapporteur on the right to health in preparing a detailed report based on his visit to Japan last November. The Government of Japan, in cooperation with the relevant ministries and agencies, did its utmost to ensure a successful and meaningful visit taking into account the SR's requests and recommendations Japan received during the Universal Periodic Review.

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011, the Government of Japan has made earthquake recovery a priority issue. Based on the Basic Act on Reconstruction, it has devoted its full efforts to realizing recovery as quickly as possible. In addition, the Government recognizes that the health management of the residents affected by the situation involving Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station is of great importance. In this regard, the Government of Japan has been working to address their health management while respecting both the latest findings of medical experts and international standards.

Japan recognizes that the Special Rapporteur has commended Japan's efforts to a certain extent. However, during the drafting of the report, Japan provided comments to clarify misunderstandings of the facts from scientific or legal viewpoints. Yet there remain areas of the report in which our explanations are not accurately reflected, so I would like to once again explain the steps Japan is taking.

As for the health management of the affected population, based on the discussions of the expert committee comprised of local doctors and medical experts in Fukushima Prefecture, the prefecture is taking the lead on its implementation. The central government has been offering financial and technical support to facilitate the smooth implementation of the Fukushima Health Management Survey. To be more specific, the Government of Japan has made a financial contribution of almost 80 billion JPY for the survey. It is focused on residents who formerly lived within the evacuation zone and includes measurement of individual doses of radiation exposure, thyroid examinations for children, blood tests including for adults, heart examinations, and a pregnancy and birth survey. These efforts are expected to continue.

The contents of the health management survey were decided based on the consensus of medical experts given their accumulated knowledge, such as in 2008 report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), and are being implemented as deemed necessary by the expert committee of the prefecture. The Government of Japan is committed to conducting health management that takes into account the latest findings of medical experts and takes a broader view toward the potential health effects.

In addition, the Government outlines in the Guidelines on Nuclear Emergency Preparedness the system by which it will be able to distribute stable iodine tablets in order to ensure that their consumption occurs in a smooth and timely manner during the process of immediate evacuation in the case of nuclear emergency.

In times of emergency, the elderly, children, and pregnant women are in a particularly vulnerable position. For the elderly, the Government of Japan has established Long-Term Care Support Bases in temporary housing communities. Detailed, comprehensive consultations are also provided for them, including nursing care services, livelihood support services, and opportunities to participate in local community activities. Mental healthcare professionals visit homes and temporary housing to perform medical assistance or otherwise support consultations with the affected residents. For the affected children, school counselors are dispatched to the affected areas to provide the necessary mental care. Based on the lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Government of Japan plans to compile “Guidelines for Ensuring a Sound Living Environment in Shelters” as a policy framework to support those in need.

The Special Rapporteur has also pointed out the importance of the observance of international standards concerning nuclear regulation and the related need for transparency. The Government of Japan attaches great importance to such international standards. In this connection, the Nuclear Regulation Authority has newly developed regulatory requirements for nuclear power reactors, which will go into effect in July 2013, taking into account the lessons learned from the accident

at Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station and IAEA nuclear safety standards to an even greater extent. Furthermore, the Government of Japan has provided opportunities to hear the opinions of stakeholders, such as offering the opportunity for public comment on the outline of the new regulatory standards as well as the formulation of the standards based on this outline. Japan also recognizes the vital importance of hearing a wide variety of opinions from our citizens from the perspective of transparency.

Japan has continued to make efforts to promote and protect the right to health as stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). We refuse to be simply satisfied with the status quo and are committed to perpetual improvement. Japan is devoting its full capacity to realizing recovery as quickly as possible. At the same time, we will diligently address the health management of the affected population based on scientific and medical knowledge in order to protect the health of both current and future citizens.

I thank you.