



## *Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations*

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866 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017 Phone: (212) 223-4300 · [www.un.int/japan/](http://www.un.int/japan/)

Statement by H. E. Mr. Yukio Takasu

Permanent Representative of Japan

at the UNDEF Information Event on the International Day of Democracy

15 September 2008

Secretary-General,

It is my distinct honor to extend warm congratulations to Mr. Rich and his colleagues in the United Nations Democracy Fund on the first International Day of Democracy.

Since its creation three years ago, the UN Democracy Fund has been instrumental to support democratization and strengthen democratic institutions throughout the world. From the initial stage, Japan has been one of the strong supporters, contributing 10 million U.S. dollars to the Fund last year.

Why democratization is important? An essential linkage between peace, development and democratization is long recognized. Democratization is prerequisite to durable peace. Challenges for development reach far beyond simply seeking for economic growth. In developing countries, the strengthening of the rule of law and democratic institutions as well as the promotion and protection of human rights are important components of both long-term stability and the acceleration of development. Thus, democratization contributes to creating a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. Japan, for this reason, strongly supports democratization efforts of developing nations.

For successful democratization, the first requirement is that the government must be elected and formed according to the will of the people as demonstrated through fair and open elections. Electoral assistance plays important role to make this happen in a new democracy. However, this alone is not enough; the government must operate with transparency and accountability; national resources must be used for the benefit of not only those in the power but of all. Action or inaction by the government must be accountable to the broad segment of population through the system of checks and balances by vibrant parliament and the freedom of speech and the press. In other words, to promote genuine democracy, it is essential to foster highly empowered civil society and the media. We applaud the support extended by the UNDEF in these areas.

In promoting genuine democracy, the rule of law and institutional reform alone is not all that we seek. A serious obstacle to democratization is the denial of human dignity to all persons. Conflict, illiteracy, gender inequality, shortage of food and housing and infectious diseases disallow people lives of dignity, instead relegating to them lives of mere survival. In order to address these issues, human-centered, human security approach is of vital importance. Human security calls for the protection of all individuals from the threats facing their livelihood and dignity, with a focus on empowerment. Such approach can be a useful yardstick to evaluate action of government and to enhance accountability.

What is the role of the United Nations in the promotion of democracy? I can see many venues open to follow. Sometimes, external assistance to democratization efforts can be seen as interference with national jurisdiction. Yet, when implemented through the universal, impartial organization like the United Nations, with full consultation with the government, support are well received and better utilized. To support countries in transition to democracy, we must enhance the United Nations' capacity. The UN Democracy Fund has proved to be one such important instrument through supporting a number of worthwhile projects.

On the occasion of the first International Day of Democracy, I would like to renew our pledge to actively promote democracy around the world and appeal all to continue to support the activities of the UN Democracy Fund.

Thank you