



Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

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Mr. Chairman,

First of all, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 43rd session of the Commission on Population and Development. I think it is very meaningful that the United Nations Commission on Population and Development has selected such an important theme as “Health, morbidity, mortality and development” for its 43rd session.

Fortunately, Japan currently enjoys one of the longest life expectancies in the world. Life expectancy in Japan exceeds 79 years for men and 86 years for women. The United Nations World Population Prospects forecasts that Japan will remain one of the countries with the longest life expectancy even in the middle of the 21st century. In this regard, it is not an exaggeration to say that Japan is exploring the frontier of increasing longevity.

At the same time, however, it is true that a considerable gap in life expectancy exists in the world. According to the United Nations World Population Prospects, life expectancies in developed regions have reached 74 years for men and 81 years for women. On the other hand, life expectancies in least developed countries (LDCs) are merely 55 and 57 respectively. In view of this dire situation, Japan has been making active contributions in the field of global health.

Today, I will introduce Japan’s experiences, current efforts, and then touch upon its international cooperation related to global health.

Mr. Chairman,

Right after the Second World War, life expectancy in Japan was merely 50 years or so. Since then, however, it increased rapidly and Japan transformed itself into the world's top country for longevity by the early 1980s. Japan is also the world front runner in terms of Healthy Life Expectancy.

In this period, demographic and disease patterns changed drastically. Like other developed countries, Japan experienced a shift from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases. This epidemiological transition was brought about by the rapid postwar economic growth and social development. At the same time, this transition promoted economic and social development.

Mild climate, a clean environment, and a relatively low-fat and low-calorie food culture featuring vegetables and fishes are believed to be the basis for Japan's transformation to the world's top country for longevity. Moreover, the introduction of a universal healthcare system which covers the whole population for an individual's entire lifetime has also contributed to this longevity. In particular, Japan made great efforts to improve maternal and child health systems. In 2008, infant mortality rate was 2.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, down from 76.7 in 1947. Similarly, in 2008, maternal mortality ratio was 3.5 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, down from 160.1 in 1947. I believe that Japan's experience could provide useful lessons for other countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Developed countries, including Japan, are moving toward ultra-long-lived societies which mankind has never experienced before. Increase in life expectancy, especially longer Healthy Life Expectancy, contributes to society and economy in various forms including as a larger labour force, consumers and volunteers. On the other hand, if an increase in life expectancy does not occur together with a longer Healthy Life Expectancy, it will cause serious strain on the society and economy. Therefore, Japan has been promoting a campaign called "Health Japan 21", which aims at increasing the awareness of disease prevention and improving lifestyle habits. It is also urgent to improve health, medical and nursing services in order to address rapidly aging societies. Japan is tackling emerging issues accompanying its long-lived society, which is unique in human history.

Mr. Chairman,

Based on our own experiences as stated earlier, Japan has been making active contributions in the field of global health from the perspective of human security. Human security is the concept which aims to address global threats such as infectious diseases by focusing on each individual and by building societies that enable people to realize their full potential through protection and empowerment. The concept of human security constitutes one of the pillars of Japan's foreign policy. It is also consistent with the ICPD Programme of Action. Japan puts an emphasis on health as the issue which is directly linked to human security and accounts for three of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

The perspective of sexual and reproductive health is closely related to these important issues. Japan shares the view, stated in the Programme of Action, that it is indispensable to ensure access to information and services related to sexual and reproductive health including family planning for achieving sustainable development.

In particular, health system strengthening is our top priority area. Japan has contributed to international discussions on health system strengthening. For instance, at the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, Japan promoted a discussion of the importance of comprehensive measures encompassing the control of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health and health system strengthening.

In order to improve health situations, it is imperative to make sure that financial resources be used effectively in securing access to necessary healthcare for all individuals. To this end, national health care policies should be formulated from a bottom-up perspective, and financial resources should be allocated properly for implementing the policy. It is thus essential to train not only doctors, nurses and community health workers but also officials who can formulate and implement health policy.

From this viewpoint, Japan will contribute actively to human resource development in the health sector of those developing countries making efforts to improve health situations under the principle of ownership. At the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) in 2008, Japan committed to train up to 100,000 health care workers in Africa and to help them stay in their own countries. In order to nurture a sense of ownership, Japan will provide

assistance bearing in mind not only the number of the trainees but also on the quality of the trained health workers. Japan will continue its efforts to steadily implement this commitment made at TICAD IV.

Mr. Chairman,

In his policy address to the Parliament in January, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama stated that he would focus on protecting people's lives. Japan will continue its efforts to tackle domestic issues associated with the ultra-long-lived society, as well as to contribute to help protect people's lives and health around the world.

Thank you very much.