

Statement by Dr. Toshiko Abe
At the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

Agenda item 3: Assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to express my gratitude to His Excellency, Ambassador Gonzalo Koncke of Uruguay and the other distinguished members of the Bureau for the successful organization of the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD).

It is my honor to address this important meeting to review the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Japan recognizes that the Programme of Action contributes to the achievement of human security, which is one of the most important guiding principles of my country's development cooperation. We have been fully committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action, and we renew our commitment to contribute to the successful implementation of the framework of ICPD Beyond 2014 and to a fruitful debate to formulate the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The key to addressing population and development issues is the empowerment of women and the promotion of their greater participation in decision-making at all levels of the society. It is women who give birth, and women who are so often given the greater share of such tasks as raising children and looking after aging parents. In the effort to protect and empower the most vulnerable members of society, including women and children, Japan has long encouraged and implemented community-level initiatives which proved to be self-sustaining and effective. Japan, with its extensive experience, wishes to work together with developing countries toward a "society in which all women shine".

In his speech at the General Debate of the General Assembly in September last year, Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Shinzo Abe, highlighted "*womenomics*", a theory which asserts that the more the advancement of women in a society is promoted, the higher the economic growth rate becomes.

In order to promote women's empowerment and facilitate their active role in society,

Japan intends to assist developing countries in enhancing measures such as increasing girls' participation in society, providing vocational-training, and improving water-supply systems in rural areas. Japan will support female farmers, especially small farmers, and female entrepreneurs particularly in Africa as stated by Prime Minister Abe at the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) last year. Japan's effort toward women's empowerment and gender equality will be conducted in close cooperation with relevant UN agencies such as UNFPA, UN-Women, UNDP and UNICEF.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to speak about our national experience. Over the last 20 years since ICPD was held in Cairo, Japan has undergone important changes in the field of population. Japan continues to enjoy the longest life expectancy of any country in the world, and this fact, coupled with our very low fertility, has meant that the proportion of the aged persons in our population has also become the highest in the world - currently 1 in 4 persons in Japan are older than 65 years of age.

One important goal for our ageing society is staying healthy even as we grow older. According to a study published in the Lancet magazine in 2012, in both 1990 and 2010, Japan ranked first among countries in Healthy Life Expectancy. Our realization of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as early as in 1961 surely played an important role in achieving the remarkable health and longevity of Japanese people. On the other hand, an aging society faces many challenges. The increasing cost of social security - including pensions, health insurance and public assistance - threatens our economic sustainability. Major reforms to deal with these issues have been and will continue to be planned and implemented.

Extremely low fertility and an aging population are found not only in Japan but also in a number of other Asian countries and in Europe. There is no miracle solution to such challenges, but the promotion of work-life balance and family friendly environments, coupled with measures toward gender equality are essential nevertheless. Japan is ready to share its experiences in this regard. Promoting the introduction of appropriate social security systems, including UHC, is also an essential component of our Strategy on Global Health Diplomacy.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is a special pleasure for me to be the first Member of Parliament from Japan to speak at CPD. Our parliament has a substantial number of members who are champions of population and development issues, and our forerunners established the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP) in 1974 as the world's first non-partisan organization committed to these issues. We make every effort to tackle these issues in close cooperation with our counterparts in other countries.

In closing, allow me to emphasize how important it is that the legislators of all Member States, who represent the people, play a vital role in addressing population and development issues.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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