



Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

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Statement by Minister Takashi Ashiki

Delegation of Japan

Item 3(b): Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of
action pertaining to the situation of social groups

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Madame Chair,

The goal of development is to improve the standard of living through balanced economic growth and fair distribution of resources. To do this--to eliminate poverty and meet basic needs, including clean drinking water, housing, and education--it is necessary to have a truly comprehensive economic development plan. It is also necessary to construct a social safety net that will protect socially vulnerable individuals and groups and correct disparities in rates of progress towards development.

The United Nations has contributed to the improvement of the situation of vulnerable groups through the adoption of various instruments such as the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and, recently, through the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

There are nevertheless many people around the world who continue to live in poverty, and the recent financial and economic crisis is only making their plight worse. In tackling this problem, we must protect the livelihoods and dignity of individuals in need. As we agreed in Copenhagen, we must "put people at the centre of development", or in other words strive always to pursue social development from the perspective of human security.

Madame Chair,

The World Programme of Action for Youth specifies 15 priority areas, which are grouped into three clusters—"youth in the global economy", "youth and their well-being", and "youth in civil society"—and addresses the particular problems that young people may encounter in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Because these priority areas are closely interrelated, we must give ample consideration to all of them if we are to formulate balanced, comprehensive policy measures that respond to the specific challenges each country or region is facing.

For this reason, Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's report A/64/61-E/2009/3, which includes his recommendations on goals and targets for the well-being of youth, including on protection from HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, engagement with civil society, and the regular collection of data to facilitate monitoring of the progress that is made.

Last May, the Government of Japan decided to contribute, through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, to a project in Bolivia implemented by UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO/PAHO entitled "Human Security for Adolescents: Empowerment and Protection against Violence, Early Pregnancy, Maternal Mortality and HIV/AIDS". With the goal of enabling adolescents to fully realize their potential and live in dignity in society, it addresses the problems of high maternal mortality rates and domestic violence and thus promotes human security, for example, by providing health services and education on sex, rights and violence and establishing networks in targeted communities.

In Japan, the Government publishes an annual "White Paper on Youth" based on a wide-ranging survey, the latest version having been published last November. Recognizing the importance of cooperation among families, schools and local communities to advancing the human rights of youth, last December, a new "National Youth Development Policy" was introduced that includes basic principles and guidelines for formulating medium- to long-term measures on youth-related issues.

Madame Chair,

Japan faces the serious challenges of an ageing society. But ageing is not only a concern in developed countries. As the Second World Forum on Global Ageing revealed, it is a global issue. In developing countries, if policies for the protection of the elderly are not adopted in a timely manner, the very lives of the elderly may be threatened, and the cost to cope with this issue, including the issue of access to medical care, will become even heavier.

Since every nation will likely to eventually encounter the challenges of an ageing society, preparations are necessary to ensure that the transition is to be made in a sound and orderly way. Recently, international organizations have begun to attach importance to social protection as an element in achieving sustainable development, and they are therefore urging that social welfare be enhanced in order to reduce the risks vulnerable people face.

Currently, Japan also supports projects in developing countries that aim to establish a foundation for medical healthcare services, for example, by improving the quality of those services that are offered locally, strengthening preventative campaigns, individual capacity-building for health service professionals, and supporting the healthcare services infrastructure. The goal is to provide basic medical healthcare services equally to all vulnerable people, enable all persons to protect their own well-being, and improve individual abilities and institutional environments towards this end.

Madame Chair,

Within the Millennium Development Goals, the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities is often overshadowed by other major goals, including the eradication of extreme poverty, the promotion of gender equality, and combating HIV/AIDS.

However, with the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the General Assembly in 2006, the importance of international cooperation in providing assistance to persons with disabilities is now widely recognized. Japan became a signatory to the Convention in September 2007.

Japan supports persons with disabilities in its official development assistance. For example, Japan provides projects that contribute to the goal of universal access to barrier-free subway systems by producing clear signage and installing elevators.

In conclusion, Madame Chair, allow me to refer to the Copenhagen Declaration, which I believe provides us with a key to overcoming the challenges we face today. In the words of the Declaration, "in both economic and social terms, the most productive policies and investments are those that empower people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities." Japan joins the rest of the international community in working actively to implement relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action to realize this goal.

I thank you, Madame Chair.

