



*Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations*

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*Provisional translation*

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**ADDRESS BY  
H.E. MR. TARO ASO  
PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN  
AT THE SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**SEPTEMBER 25, 2008  
NEW YORK**

Mr. President,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my greatest honour to stand here as the new Japanese Prime Minister—brand new, really, having been designated by the Diet just slightly more than 24 hours ago.

First I would like to congratulate Your Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on assuming the Presidency of the General Assembly. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to His Excellency Dr. Srgjan Kerim, former President of the General Assembly, for his devoted efforts during his tenure. I wish also to express my profound respect for the tireless leadership demonstrated by His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the management of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Being back in New York I am reminded of an old saying about bankers. It seems that there are only two types of bankers in the world, bankers with short memories and bankers with no memories.

In finance, manias and panics cling together in much the same way that shadows follow objects. Manias invariably develop over time, which then give rise to panic.

It was ten years ago, in September no less, that the world saw a nightmare in which liquidity suddenly dried up. For more than the last quarter-century, it seems almost as if manias and panics have performed a never-ending musical rondo every few years, with a large number of countries and markets as their stage, naturally including Tokyo.

Tokyo stayed relatively clearheaded during the most recent frenzy. But, that said, it could be argued this was due to little more than the unusually long time we had suffered when our hangover morphed into a debt overhang as a result of the previous craze of the 1980's and 90's.

This rondo continues on without end, and so certainly humankind will once again hear this very same melody in the not-too-distant future. We simply must advance inch by inch each time and resolve to become more prudent.

Vociferous arguments on international financial architecture are about to begin once more. Japan is eager to contribute its experiences and its knowledge.

Mr. President,

In Japan, May is the season for enjoying new green growth, and July 7 is the day on which children and adults alike tie strips of paper bearing hand-written wishes to bamboo branches hung from the eaves and look to the night sky as they pray for their dreams to come true.

This year in May, Japan held the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, also known as "TICAD IV," bringing together some 3,000 participants in the port city of Yokohama.

From Africa, representatives of 51 nations gathered, including 41 at the head of state and government level. Enthusiastically advocating for a "Vibrant Africa," this Conference called for support to accelerate economic growth. To pursue the Millennium Development Goals in a sustainable manner, and to foster health, water and sanitation, and education in Africa on the basis of human security, the concept which Japan has carefully nurtured—three thousand people renewed their determination to achieve these goals. The vibrancy of Japan's fresh green

leaves surely touched the heart of each participant.

Then, on July 7, the day on which we pray for the realisation of our dreams for the future, the Government of Japan moved the stage to Lake Toyako on our northern island of Hokkaido, opening the G8 Summit and a series of outreach meetings.

Japan again put issues regarding development among the main themes, and we invited a large number of African participants. This was to ensure that the momentum generated by TICAD IV would be firmly maintained.

As a result of making climate change another Summit theme, we succeeded in agreeing to seek to adopt a global long-term target of reducing emissions and to seek to create under the United Nations an effective framework in which all major economies participate in a responsible way. This is an outcome of the Toyako Summit that should be regarded as no small matter. We aim to realise these goals by no later than the end of 2009.

Mr. President and honourable delegates, I believe that you associate efforts to address climate change with the name of Japan's ancient capital for a thousand years, Kyoto. Japan has always felt some degree of pride regarding this issue. Japan leads the globe in requiring the least amount of energy to produce one unit of GDP. Our technological creativity has been in the background making that possible. We are eager for the world to utilise this to a much greater extent. The idea of a sectoral approach is also something with which Japan aims to contribute to many other countries.

Mr. President,

Such was the mark achieved by the G8 just over two months ago with Japan as the chair.

We are now witnessing irregularities in the global economy. It is my wish—and indeed, my belief—that the pledges of May and the dreams of July will be impervious to the strong and fast winds that now buffet them. Making a "Vibrant Africa" even more vibrant, or ending global environmental degradation through the efforts of all nations—both of these

have an important premise: the stability of the global economy.

With this being the case, then as I see it, the task ahead for Japan is already quite clear, namely, that Japan's primary responsibility lies in invigorating its own economy. In light of the size of the Japanese economy, the second-largest in the world, certainly this would be the most immediately effective contribution that Japan can deliver. I will work determinedly to realise this very contribution. This is my pledge to you, Mr. President, and to this august Assembly.

Mr. President,

Allow me now to change the topic to relate to you a small episode that took place this past summer.

This transpired in a small town on the outskirts of Tokyo. Nine high school students from abroad arrived there at the end of August, and it was their first time to set foot in Japan. There was nothing unusual about these very typical-looking high school student visitors grimacing at the unfamiliar food they were presented with.

But there was one regard in which these young men and women stood apart from participants in conventional invitation programs. These high school students-four Palestinians and five Israelis-had all lost at least one relative as a result of terrorism or other aspects of the severe situation facing the Middle East.

Mr. President,

I have just introduced one of the ongoing efforts by Japanese civil society to promote reconciliation. These high school students may have no chance to interact with each other when they are back home. But for the several days that they are in a faraway country, travelling in pairs made up of Israelis and Palestinians to here and there across the beautiful and verdant land of Japan, something changes inside them. These young people come to understand that religion and ethnicity make no difference when it comes to the sorrow felt at losing a parent, and they often cry tears upon coming to this realisation. Through these tears of understanding they will come to see ties between their futures.

For comprehensive peace in the Middle East, what is necessary is the mental "groundwork" that will make such peace possible. By investing in the young minds of high school students, Japanese civil society is working to foster this groundwork.

Mr. President,

As this example suggests, there is no doubt in my mind that there are certain types of diplomacy that Japan is uniquely able to undertake.

If Israeli "drip irrigation" technology were to be introduced in the West Bank of the Jordan River, Palestinian youth would be able to devote themselves to the production of vegetables. However, the wall of distrust that separates the two sides will not allow that in the immediate future. Here, Japan desires to act as a catalyst, serving as a mediator between the two sides. Japan is willing to bring its own technologies that maximize the potential of drip irrigation.

In time, as a result of irrigation, the land of the West Bank will become fertile. The agricultural products grown there will be processed by Palestinians and transported through Jordan to be laid out fresh in stores in consuming regions around the Gulf. The Government of Japan aims to bring about such a future through its initiative: "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity".

Here, Japan continues to provide its technologies and funding, but most of all, it aims to be a mediator fostering trust. Needless to say, trust is the scarcest resource of all in the Middle East.

The Government of Japan is currently preparing to submit a draft resolution on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. I believe that there is no one who questions the wholehearted commitment of the Japanese people to this issue. In the same way, I believe it would be superfluous to elaborate on the fact that Japan values the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Japan has fielded Mr. Yukiya Amano, Ambassador to the International Organizations in Vienna and former Chairman of the Board of Governors of the IAEA, as a candidate to be the next Director General of the IAEA. I strongly urge your support of his

candidacy.

Mr. President,

Just a moment ago, I touched briefly on the significance of July 7 for Japan. The heads of state and government and their spouses that gathered in Toyako for the G8 Summit wrote their wishes on bamboo leaves. While the words they chose varied, there was not a single person who did not include a wish for peace.

Yet in the short space of time since then, there have been incidents at various locations disturbing the peace, one after another. First, regarding the situation in Georgia, I strongly expect to see a peaceful resolution of the issues, based on the principle of territorial integrity, with the parties involved, including Russia, acting in a responsible manner.

And speaking of July 7, this date conjures up abhorrent memories in the United Kingdom. We, the delegates assembled here, have become newly incensed at the atrocity of the terrorist attack that took place in Islamabad five days ago. It has also turned out to be difficult to find the path towards improving the situation in Afghanistan. There has been no change whatsoever to the fact that terrorism constitutes the greatest threat to the peace and prosperity of the world.

I believe that the international community must continue to be engaged in tenacious efforts to combat terrorism. Japan has from the start been committed to reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan and we have maintained our refuelling activities in the Indian Ocean. I would like to state here that Japan will continue into the future to stand side by side with the international community and participate proactively in the fight against terrorism.

Among outstanding issues in the vicinity of Japan, it goes without saying that the most pressing are those concerning North Korea.

North Korea has abducted Japanese citizens including an innocent young girl named Megumi. Despite having pledged to begin an investigation anew into the abduction victims, it has still not taken action towards fulfilling this commitment. Regarding its pledge to abandon its

nuclear programmes, it is widely known that recently there has been conspicuous lack of progress. In parallel with the actions that North Korea would take, I am prepared to take actions towards the resolution of the outstanding issues of concern between Japan and North Korea and the settlement of the unfortunate past between us, moving Japan-North Korea relations forward. What we await is action by North Korea. I will also continue to pursue the abandonment of North Korea's nuclear capabilities and its nuclear weapons through the framework of the Six-Party Talks.

That leads me to say that China and the Republic of Korea are each important partners for Japan and countries with which Japan must seek to increase mutual benefits and shared interests. Japan must promote multilayered cooperation with both of these countries as well as with ASEAN. Together, we must enhance the peace and prosperity of the East Asian region, and beyond, the world peace and prosperity.

Mr. President,

As I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, I have only very recently become Japan's Prime Minister. I was designated Prime Minister by the Diet and appointed by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan barely 24 hours ago, and this is my first engagement since assuming office. I hope that through my remarks thus far you can appreciate why I have taken such pains to join you here today. There are numerous points I have been wanting to raise.

Looking back, Japan has come a long way, with the Japan-US alliance as an unchangeable cornerstone, while steadfastly enhancing the relationships with neighbouring Asian nations. And, I believe that you, Mr. President, and all the other dignitaries gathered in this Assembly hall will without exception acknowledge that Japan strongly emphasizes the importance of the United Nations and has never once veered from the path of international cooperation. Even though they have suffered setbacks at times, the citizens of Japan, who have so vigorously pursued the building of the economy, have been guided by a single philosophy until the present day, that peace and happiness are most certainly within our grasp through the pursuit of economic prosperity and democracy.

I am determined to work in solidarity with countries holding

fundamental values in common and to share Japan's experiences with nations strongly needing such support. It is my unwavering view that this is a responsibility incumbent on Japan.

Mr. President,

It is for these reasons that, speaking on behalf of the people of Japan, I must state and reiterate the absolute imperative of United Nations Security Council reform. We must bring about the early reform of the Security Council through an expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent memberships. Next month, new non-permanent members of the Council will be elected, and Japan is standing as a candidate. Mr. President, colleagues, let me conclude my remarks today by expressing my sincere wish for the support of the member states for Japan's candidacy.

Thank you for your kind attention.