

Statement by Mr. Takashi Ashiki
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to the United Nations

Taking Collective Action to End Human Trafficking

Panel II: Articulating a Global Plan of Action:
Drawing upon practice at the national and regional level

13 May 2009

Madam Moderator,

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime involving a grave violation of human rights and human dignity. With the continued advance of globalization and the widening of economic disparities, it has also become a transnational threat to which the entire international community must therefore respond with effective countermeasures.

To participate in the fashioning of such measures, in March Japan dispatched Parliamentary Vice-Minister Nishimura to serve as a panelist at the international conference entitled “Human Trafficking at the Crossroads” held in Bahrain and Parliamentary Vice-Minister Minorikawa to attend the third Bali Process Meeting in Indonesia last month.

Madam Moderator,

In keeping with the Human Trafficking Protocol, Japan has been implementing comprehensive measures against human trafficking. In 2004, the Government of Japan established “The Inter-Ministerial Task Force to Combat Trafficking in Persons” within the Cabinet, and, after soliciting the views of NGOs and other relevant organizations, formulated “The National Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons,” which focuses on the “prevention and eradication of human trafficking” and the “protection of victims.”

In addition, the Government of Japan hosted the second World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, and in November of last year dispatched Parliamentary Vice-Minister Nishimura to speak at the opening session of the third Congress held in Rio de Janeiro. In his statement, he made it clear that, together with the rest of the international community, Japan will continue to work actively to end the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

Madam Moderator,

As all of us are aware, there is disagreement about whether we should adopt a Global Action Plan and what it should consist of. For our part, we believe there needs to be

further discussion in the appropriate fora, especially the Conference of States Parties to UNTOC, and we have submitted this view to the Secretary-General for his consideration as he prepares his background paper. It is expected, however, that all stakeholders, including civil society, will continue to do everything possible to provide protection to victims of human trafficking and prosecute the perpetrators.

Madam Moderator,

To prevent and even eradicate the crime of trafficking as well as to ensure continuing protection to victims, by reintegrating them into society, for example, it is essential that the countries of destination and countries of origin cooperate closely with each other. To that end, the Japanese Government thus far has dispatched inter-ministerial delegations to a total of 19 countries of origin. There they have met with governments, relevant international organizations and NGOs. As one result of such a mission, “The Japan-Thailand Joint Task Force on Counter Trafficking in Persons” was established, and it now engages in consultations on ways of improving operational procedures to protect and repatriate trafficking victims. In order to advance international cooperation on human trafficking, we will continue sending such delegations to the countries involved.

Madam Moderator,

The Government of Japan shares the concerns raised by some governments about the possibility that valuable resources and attention might be diverted should the Global Action Plan be adopted. We also would hesitate to go along with the idea of establishing a new mechanism based on the plan, because of the overlapping and duplicated activities that are likely to result. In this regard, we welcome the recent decision of the Inter-agency Cooperation Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) that it will meet at least once a year. We hope that stakeholders will engage in an active exchange about good practices.

Madam Moderator,

If we are to adopt a Global Action Plan, it must be consistent with existing legal instruments. From this point of view, we need to have further discussion about whether it is the appropriate way to offer a road map for the review of the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. Some may be of the view that the road map should be discussed at the Conference of States Parties to UNTOC.

It is clear that there is variation from region to region

and country to country in the implementation of legal instruments relating to human trafficking and in the root causes of the gaps that exist in such implementation. If we are to adopt a Global Action Plan, therefore, it should not be one-size-fits-all but flexible, so it will be utilized and adopted in every region of the world.