

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Koro Bessho
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations
At the Panel Discussion on the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy:
Advancing Women's Participation and Leadership
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor to speak at this important event on integrating a gender perspective in countering terrorism. Today I am pleased to introduce Japan's efforts and give you an example of how Member States might contribute to women's empowerment in preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism.

One example of Japan's efforts is the assistance to Cameroon through a UN Women project. This project succeeded in identifying and providing tailored support, including medical, psychosocial, legal and judicial support, to Boko Haram survivors. National actors' capacity to protect gender-based violence survivors was enhanced through the training of high-level police officers and instructors. To increase public awareness and social mobilization, local leaders were sensitized, and many people were reached through individual and

mass awareness, door to door strategy, educational talks and group discussion on gender based violence.

This project also contributed to the economic empowerment of women. They received training on small business management skills, including basic finance, and also received economic kits that would enable them to start small businesses such as the selling of cereals and other basic food stuff.

Let me recount the successful story of thirty-six-year-old Saruta Andrawas, who was protected and empowered through this project. She is a former hostage of Boko Haram, widow and mother to four children. One day, Boko Haram came to their village. They caught her husband and killed him in front of her and their children. They later kidnapped Andrawas and her children and took them to the mountains in a cave where they were kept for three months. Andrawas and her children were given food only once a day. Every day Boko Haram threatened to kill them. One night, Andrawas realized that the terrorists were not standing

guard with guns. She and her children escaped to the refugee camp in the Far North region of Cameroon, where they found refuge at the Women Cohesion Space, which was set up and managed by UN Women. Japan is happy to have provided the necessary financing for the Women Cohesion Space, and we appreciate further contribution from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency. This and other Spaces are now being jointly managed by UN Women and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Family of Cameroon, and are planned to be handed over to the ministry next year. At the Space, Andrawas received psycho-social assistance and counseling to regain her health.

This is not the end of the story. After escaping to the Women Cohesion Space, Andrawas received training on income-generating activities. She learned how to develop a business plan, keep daily records, and manage cash flow and credit. She also received bags of groundnuts and a grinding mill to start her own business of processing and selling oil.

Today I stress not only the importance of women's protection, but also the importance of women's empowerment. Women are not just victims. Their roles include shaping communities and family values, identifying and intervening at early signs of radicalization, and using various forms of media to promote counter narratives. The 5th Review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy notes the importance of the participation and leadership of women in efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism.

Japan believes that it is through contribution to and support for such activities that donor can contribute most effectively. Japan, on its part, has promoted women's engagement in the area of preventing violent extremism through global projects.

Last month, Japan decided to provide financial assistance of around 18 million USD through UN Women to various parts of the world for women's protection, empowerment and leadership. In November

last year, Japan hosted the Fourth World Assembly for Women, WAW! in short, in which many participants from around the world emphasized how critical women's empowerment was to prevent terrorism and violent extremism.

In conclusion, Japan wishes to work closely with other Member States to play a part in women's empowerment, leadership and participation in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. To achieve these goals, we must unite together and take concrete actions.

Thank you.