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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 44th session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the condolences and assistance Japan has received from approximately 130 countries, more than 30 international organizations, and people all around the world in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The rescue workers and nuclear power experts from various countries, assistance with food, medical materials, blankets, and other supplies, and offers of assistance from over 670 NGOs and other organizations have all been profoundly uplifting to the Japanese people. Japan faces an unprecedented crisis, in which an incident at a nuclear power plant has transpired in addition to the enormous earthquake and tsunamis. I firmly believe that, receiving such cooperation from the members of the international community, the Japanese people will mobilize their wisdom to recover from these challenging circumstances through their collective efforts and thereby successfully overcome this trying time.

On behalf of the Japanese people, I would like once again to express my deepest appreciation upon having received this truly tremendous outpouring of cordial assistance from around the world.

Mr. Chairman,

It is expected that, in line with its steady rise, the world's population may reach 9.15 billion by 2050. While the average annual population growth rate is 1.2%, poor countries tend to have a higher population growth rate. The population increase is significantly exacerbating poverty, unemployment, food shortages, educational shortfalls and environmental deterioration. At a time when urgent countermeasures are required, I find it very meaningful that the United Nations Commission on Population and Development selected "Fertility, reproductive health and development" as a theme of its 44th session.

The fertility rate, however, is not something that should in all cases simply be decreased. Japan is recently facing the problem of a low fertility rate. The total fertility rate of Japan is far below the level necessary to replace our population, and consequently our society is aging rapidly. In order to address this challenge, our government has formulated "The Vision on Children and Childcare" which provides concrete numerical targets and has been working toward its realization. This vision is based on the basic ideas of "Children First" and bringing up children by society as a whole. Increasing fertility will help to slow down the progress of the aging of our society, lessen our social-security burden and boost our economic vitality. Japan is working to ensure safe conception and childbirth, enhance the ability of communities to raise children and increase the participation of men in child-rearing, in a manner that aims to realize the hopes and aspirations of every individual.

Mr. Chairman,

In the past, Japan confronted the issues of high infant mortality and a high rate of abortion. Factors that contributed to our success in overcoming these problems include the national supervision of the network of public health and medical systems that were addressing the most urgent challenges of

each historical era, the formulation and enactment of policies based on a firm grasp of the actual situation arrived at by cooperating with academia and the scientific community, the collaboration of government, doctors and midwives in the private sector, non-government organizations, community organizations, and the media in overcoming various challenges, and the establishment of the Pregnant Mother's Handbook System.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to share its own experiences with the international community, Japan has been making active contributions in the field of global health based on the principle of human security. The concept of human security aims to create a society in which each individual can achieve his or her potential with dignity free from want and fear. It cannot be realized without improving health conditions which are directly linked to human lives. Japan puts great emphasis on health which accounts for three of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan shares the recognition stated in the Programme of Action that it is indispensable to ensure access to information and services related to sexual and reproductive health –including family planning– for achieving sustainable development. Based on this recognition, Japan has been supporting the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) since 1971 and contributed over 26 million US dollars to the UNFPA and over 10 million US dollars to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) last year. In 2010, Japan provided support for the implementation of Afghanistan's census as well as instruments and other supplies needed for emergency obstetric treatment to UNFPA projects in Pakistan, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thereby medically and socially supporting women and their children.

Mr. Chairman,

While each individual intervention is indispensable, equally indispensable is the promotion of a policy package for effective health support that will continually connect each component of its implementation to a larger whole. Japan announced at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the 65th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September last year its commitment to contribute 5 billion dollars in assistance to the field of health over 5 years starting from 2011 including a contribution amounting to 800 million dollars to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in the coming years. In addition, Japan proposed the MNCH assistance model EBRACE (Ensure Mothers and Babies Get Access to Care) as part of its new global health policy. This model organically combines community-based preventive and clinical care –including family planning for expectant mothers– facility-based preventive and clinical care, and support for healthy childhood development –including immunizations. Japan, with the participation of all stakeholders in the field of health including MNCH, and in cooperation with other development partners, will adopt this new policy of promoting a comprehensive approach to planning interventions designed and implemented on the basis of sound scientific evidence, embodying an outcome-oriented approach and strengthening coordination.

Thank you very much.