



(Check Against Delivery)

Statement by Dr. Reiko Hayashi
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At the Forty-Eighth Session
of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development
April 2015

Madame Chairperson,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you and the honorable members of the bureau on your election and I wish for a successful 48th Session of the Commission on Population and Development.

I am delighted to address the session during this memorable year 2015, the year of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the year when we renew global development objectives. It is also the 70th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations. Various challenges remain to be resolved through the United Nations and Japan will continuously take part in the international collaboration.

In Japan in 2015, the ageing ratio—the proportion of the population aged 65 years or over—hit 26.3%, the highest in the world. However, looking back over history, the speed of ageing has been very quick. When the first United Nations World Population Conference was held in Bucharest in 1974, the Japanese ageing ratio was only 7.7%, much lower than Western countries. Japan's objective at the time was to lower the fertility rate to below the replacement level. However since then, the population aged rapidly and the fertility decline is now proceeding to the level which could threaten the existence of the country. Population problems have dual aspects, the increase and the decrease, and it is essential to grasp the situation based on the evidence. Measures should be taken accordingly.

Meanwhile, life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in Japan is the highest level in the world. Universal Health Coverage achieved in 1961 and the continuous KAIZEN or amendment and improvement of the system, are experiences we are ready to share with the world. In order to promote Active Ageing and create a Smart Platinum Society, we will introduce the 'My Number' system to efficiently manage social security, and an Integrated Community Care System that can



help the ‘Ageing in Place’ where the municipality plays a central role to coordinate hospitals, long-term care facilities, NPO and related organizations. Innovations will be the important component for the health and long-term care using information technology, including robotics.

The Japanese fertility rate hit its lowest rate in 2005 and it has been increasing slightly but steadily since then. However, in contrast to Western European countries, the cohort fertility rate declines continuously and there is a long way before we arrive at the replacement level. To tackle this problem, the role of the government is not to set a numerical fertility rate target but create a favorable environment so that couples who want to have children can have them. Empowerment of women is top priority right now domestically and internationally. Many measures are being taken such as the continued provisions of child allowance, guaranteeing maternity and parental leave, and the creation and expansion of nurseries and kindergartens. To tackle infertility, a subsidy scheme was introduced and the proportion of births using Assisted Reproductive Technology rose to a high of 3.7% of total births in 2012.

Population decline is a steady phenomenon with the population decreasing every year by around 200,000 people. However at the regional level, there are prefectures where the population decline started much earlier. Urbanization and population concentration in urban areas—especially the Tokyo Metropolitan Area—is an issue to be balanced in order to activate non-urban areas. The Comprehensive Strategy for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing the Local Economy in Japan will promote the employment of young people and enhance the environment so people can get married and rear children while empowering municipalities.

Japan's policy does not aim to replace the population decline with immigrants but the international migration is active along with globalization. According to census figures, one quarter of the Japanese population decline was offset by the increase of immigrants from 2005 to 2010. Whether increasing the number of immigrants should be deliberately determined based on policy and national consensus, measures are being taken to promote immigration of highly skilled professionals to boost economic growth and job creation.

Madame Chairperson,

In this year of 2015, a new international development target will be set. The Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the Open Working Group succeeded in including the topic of sexual and reproductive health which Japan eagerly supported. We will renew our commitment for sexual and reproductive health through Universal Health Coverage in the framework of the



post-2015 Development Agenda.

The unfinished agenda of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development should be executed firmly. Moreover, population ageing and intergenerational cooperation is a new challenge for the international community. Today we are faced with rapid demographic changes and the youth needs investments both for today and for the future. Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a good investment. We will continuously promote Human Security and UHC as the target for the world to achieve. If we consider a 15 years cycle as a norm, two rounds still remain until the centenary of the United Nations in 2045. Let us remind ourselves that it is we who are responsible for realizing the future we want.