

Statement by the Representative of the Government of Japan
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Mr. Chairman,

I would like to join the other delegates in congratulating you on your assumption of the leadership of this important Commission. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for the reports which serve as a basis for our deliberations.

The theme of this session, international migration, is a multifaceted issue with far-reaching implications. Individuals migrate for a variety of reasons. Some flee war, civil unrest, or political persecution. Others are driven by poverty and famine to seek better lives for themselves and their families. Still others leave their homes involuntarily as victims of human trafficking. When discussing international migration, therefore, we must consider it from the perspectives of development, economics, demographic dynamics, foreign policy, and international law.

Fundamentally, however, international migration is an issue of human rights and dignity. In this way, it falls under the concept of human security. Human security stresses the protection and empowerment of individuals and seeks to shift the focus of development activities from the national to the community and individual levels. In today's globalizing world, the challenge posed by international migration is becoming increasingly difficult for countries to face alone. It is a challenge that requires collective action. Japan believes that human security can provide an effective conceptual framework for international cooperation.

International migrants can be classified into 4 groups: skilled and unskilled migrant workers, refugees and asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDP), and victims of human trafficking, as discussed at the Workshop on Human Security hosted by the

Government of Mexico in cooperation with the Government of Japan in February. Let me briefly introduce Japan's policies towards some of them.

First on migrant workers. Prior to and for a short period after World War II, many Japanese migrated overseas, particularly to Central and South America. Today, however, Japan, like many developed countries, has become a recipient of migrants. They arrive amidst the background of a declining birthrate and an aging society. In 2000 Japan's population was approximately 127 million, 17.4% of which were over age 65. By 2050, the population is expected to decline to around 100 million, while the number of elderly will likely double. Taking note of these trends, the Japanese government is continuing to welcome skilled workers based on the 9th Employment Strategy adopted in 1999. These workers are making social and economic contributions and helping promote internationalization in Japan.

Second, let me mention Japan's actions to combat trafficking in persons. Trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights and requires prompt and decisive measures. Through bi-lateral ODA and contributions to the Human Security Trust Fund and international organizations like IOM, Japan has supported the efforts of countries of origin, especially in Asia, to prevent trafficking and rehabilitate victims. For example, last month Japan contributed \$2 million through the UN Trust Fund for Human Security Trust Fund for a project implemented by the ILO for returned victims of trafficking in Thailand and the Philippines. Another example is Japan's support for an IOM project aimed at repatriating victims. At the end of March there were 67 cases of individuals who were successfully resettled.

In addition, it is important to raise awareness about the threat of human trafficking in areas affected by natural disasters. Every effort must be made to protect vulnerable individuals like women and children. With this in mind, Japan implemented the "Child Support Plan for Tsunami Victims," which included counter-measures against the trafficking children and provided US \$86 million to UNICEF, UN Habitat, the IOM and the WHO.

Besides these international efforts, the Government of Japan has been undertaking

domestic initiatives to combat human trafficking. In 2004 it established an Inter-Ministerial Liaison Committee which adopted a comprehensive national action plan focusing on prevention, prosecution, and victim protection. Furthermore, last year the Diet approved the conclusion of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants Land, Sea and Air. At the same time, the penal code was revised to more effectively deal with human trafficking by expanding the scope of punishable acts and imposing severe penalties.

Thirdly, Japan strives to advance lasting peace and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. Therefore Japan is assisting refugees through financial contributions to multilateral organizations. Since 1979 Japan has accepted Indochinese refugees not only on humanitarian grounds but also from the point of view of contributing to the peace and stability of Southeast Asia. In line with its accession to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Japan amended its Immigration Control Order to support refugees.

Mr. Chairman

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Japan's commitment to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action and achieving of the MDGs. We also reiterate the importance of human security as a guiding principle in addressing international migration and population issues. Japan will continue to work hand in hand with the international community to achieve solutions to these mutual challenges.