



## *Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations*

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Mr. Chairman,

First of all, allow us to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission of Population and Development.

According to the U.N., this year, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population will be living in urban areas.

In the case of Japan, the population has already been majority urban for some time. Whereas in 1950 the ratio of urban to rural population stood at 37.3 percent, that figure had doubled by 1975, and as of 2005, it stood at 86.3 percent.

Cities are where advanced industrial activities that foster economic growth take place, and where people's lives are in some ways most intense. The development of cities yields advantages, but it also presents new challenges. For example, in the environmental area, we struggle to deal with the disposal of waste and face disasters and crimes.

As urbanization advances, the growing disparity between urban and rural areas has become a matter of ever greater concern. We are aware that declining rural vitality may make it more difficult for people to secure food and water, for example, or engage in disaster management and conservation of land as forests deteriorate. For this reason, we

are promoting not only urban policies but also measures to promote “regional revitalization.” Allow me to offer some examples of what we are doing in this area.

Under the concept that has been advanced of “mutual reliance between rural areas and cities,” which is to say of mutual support between rural and urban areas, Japan convened “The Meeting of Regional Revitalization Headquarters”. At that meeting, “The Strategy for Regional Revitalization” and “The Plan to Improve Cities and Urban Life” were announced, and ministries and agencies of the government of Japan are united in grappling with the revitalization of both rural areas and cities.

Recognizing the necessity of securing lifestyles of local residents, creating attractive towns and cities, and also revitalizing industry in response to the actual situation of each region, we have introduced what we call Directors in charge of Regions, who solicit and listen to the views of people in communities and are setting up a unified counseling center in each region. Also, we have just inaugurated a Program for Regional Revitalization as concerted efforts of the government for regional revitalization, which is directly sponsored by the government of Japan, and will allow selected regions to work on their revitalization maintaining their flexibilities.

On urban policy, for the purpose of improving and upgrading urban life from the viewpoint of citizens, we are making efforts to better the quality of life through community activities, and to change from a “flow-system society,” which is characterized primarily by its engagement in construction and destruction, to a “stock-system society,” which is characterized primarily by what has been called “the creation of goods, their long and careful use beyond the generations, while enjoying affluent lives.”

We are also developing diverse human resources to engage, each in his or her own way, in the development of towns and cities with ingenuity and enthusiasm and management of the region in which they live, and a framework to promote those activities through the measures mentioned earlier as well as build network of those people in the region, which might be called “social capital.”

Based on these plans, we have established three priority areas in which we need to set policy direction on measures to be taken: realizing safe and secured urban lives,

responding to global environmental issues, and strengthening international competitiveness and promoting international exchange. With these points in mind, we are promoting measures against crimes and disasters and global warming, and inviting international conferences.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding our employment situation, the overall unemployment rate has improved in Japan, having been brought down to less than four percent. But the pace of improvement has varied in different regions of the country.

To correct these regional disparities, it is necessary to encourage the creation of jobs based on regional advantages from a long-term perspective. To this end, acting on the basis of Japan's Law on Promotion of Regional Employment Development, the government has been lending intensive support to areas that suffer from severe unemployment and are particularly eager to create new jobs. .

Also, in line with these efforts to create regional jobs, we are facilitating the smooth migration of labor from urban to rural areas through what we are referring to as "wide-area employment placement," using a nationwide network of unemployment offices and organizing joint job interviews in collaboration with labor departments of prefectural and city governments, targeting urban residents who wish to move to these areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Urbanization is a multidimensional phenomenon, and measures that adequately correspond to that reality are needed. I can assure you that for our part, we intend to continue to work to build a nation where people can live their lives safe and sound through the revitalization of their regions.

Thank you.