

Statement by Minister Eiichi Oshima, Representative of Japan (19 April 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Motoc, on your assumption of the Chairmanship. I am confident that under your guidance our work at this session will be most productive. You may rest assured that my delegation will give you and the other members of the Bureau its full support throughout the course of this session.

I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, for the very comprehensive presentation that he made yesterday.

Mr. Chairman,

As you are aware, since last year, the United Nations has been facing various criticisms for alleged corruption in the Oil-for-Food Programme and charges of sexual exploitation in peacekeeping operations. Some of these accusations have been proven to be true, and these instances of misconduct and corruption must be redressed. However, it seems that some in the media are overreacting. Is this occurring because the United Nations, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, is losing its *raison d'être* in the world? I am confident that the answer is a resounding "no." As repeatedly pointed out by the reports of the Secretary-General and the High-level Panel, the international community is facing the new threats and challenges of the 21st century, and the rationale for the UN to continue its work thus has grown stronger rather than being diminished.

At the same time, it is my feeling that behind these criticisms and attacks lies the perception that today the UN has become unable to effectively address these new threats and challenges. As you know, Mr. Chairman, the necessity of UN reform, in order to effectively address these threats and challenges, has been repeatedly pointed out in many reports and by numerous delegates right up to the present. In this connection, the Japanese government expects that, as we approach the summit to be held in September this year, the Department of Public Information will appeal to the world public to recognize the need for UN reform, convey the new role of the UN in the field of maintenance of international peace and security, and assert its achievements.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan welcomes that the Report of the UN Millennium Project has focused mainly on human-centered development strategies. Japan feels that the MDGs can only be achieved by protecting people against threats to their well-being while empowering each person to deal with such threats individually. This approach is exactly in line with the concept of "human security" that Japan has been promoting. Japan is also of the firm belief that nation-building begins with human capacity-building and must place emphasis upon assistance in areas such as education and training as well as basic infrastructure. Through the promotion of capacity-building, sound ownership will be fostered. From that point of view, Japan has recently

launched the "African Village Initiative." This initiative aims at empowering local communities to meet their own needs. It takes the form of a core project with a series of related multi-sectoral projects. For example, a school construction project will be implemented in close collaboration with supporting programs such as school meal programs, well excavation and health care services, so that it empowers the entire community with the school as its core. By having a well in the community, not a few children will be freed from the chore of fetching water from a remote well, and thus be afforded the time to go to school. When the midday meal is provided, the nutritional condition of the children will be improved. If, in addition, the child of a poor family brings a portion of the meal home, the family will then have greater incentive to send the child to school. My delegation wishes to cooperate with the DPI to promote greater interest in and awareness of endeavors of this kind in Africa and other areas in the world.

Mr. Chairman,

We are aware that, since the reform proposal of the Secretary-General was issued in 2002, the Department, under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Mr. Shashi Tharoor, has taken the lead in striving for reform in the Secretariat, and Japan highly appreciates the Secretariat's concrete actions and initiatives to that end, which are enumerated in the recent SG report (A/AC.198/2005/2). Among the various improvements, I believe that quite a few people feel that the UN website has improved substantially. For example, now we can follow press releases, press briefings and press conferences through the frequently updated "UN News Centre." We are pleased to note that the DPI has been so successful in conveying the activities of the UN to a considerable number of people around the world, and within the limits of existing resources. I am convinced that the improved reliability of the UN website is the central reason behind the increase in the number of hits on the UN website. The improvement of public information services will be achieved through a continuous process. It is not a one-time event. That is why we expect that the Department will continue its efforts in that direction on the basis of what has been acquired through these reforms and the restructuring.

Now let me touch upon the subject of the rationalization of the network of the UN information centres. In the last three years, we saw the establishment of the regional United Nations information centre in Western Europe, which is the only real achievement in terms of a regional hub so far, and my government pays high respect for the determination and efforts of DPI and the Western European countries. UNIC Tokyo is also one of the centres mentioned in the SG report (A/57/387) which are located in high-cost, developed countries. In this connection, despite severe budgetary constraints, my government made a great effort to ensure that UNIC Tokyo would not absorb a large proportion of DPI's resources, contributing as much as 350,000 dollars in assistance for its activities this year. Allow me to point out that this represents an increase of more than 70% in support over a three-year period.

UNIC Tokyo is the only centre from which the United Nations issues information in Japanese, and it therefore plays an extremely important role in furthering an awareness of the importance of the UN among the Japanese people. For example, "EXPO 2005 AICHI, JAPAN" began in March this year, with the theme, "Nature's Wisdom", and the UN is

sponsoring the United Nations Pavilion at the exposition, focusing on "Celebrating Diversity." UNIC Tokyo is playing a key role in drawing greater public attention to the UN Pavilion. UNIC Tokyo is also continuing the promotion of the Global Compact initiative, and has now assumed the role of the secretariat of the Global Compact Japan Network. My government will continue to work in close cooperation with the Centre to encourage the participation of Japanese companies in this initiative.

Mr. Chairman,

It is essential to reach an agreement on the new United Nations prior to the summit in September. The time is ripe for action, and Japan expects that the public information activities of the Department will play a key role in appealing worldwide public opinion to support the efforts for UN reform.

Thank you.