

**Statement by Yasuhide Nakayama, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
High-Level Segment of the Human Rights Council at its Seventh Session
(March 3, 2008, Geneva)**

Mr. President,
Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, Japan would like to commend His Excellency Mr. Doru Costea, Ambassador of Romania, for his efforts in promoting the institution building of the Council. We would also like to express our appreciation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Louise Arbour, for her contributions.

Mr. President,

Japan shares the opinion of the international community that the Council should be an effective institution. The question before us now is what kind of future the Human Rights Council will construct on this foundation.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is about to start soon. It is our sincere hope that the UPR mechanism, including its follow-up measures, will prove to be an effective tool for the Human Rights Council. Japan intends to contribute its utmost to this end.

Mr. President,

Even under the new mechanism of the UPR, the significance of the country-specific special rapporteur system remains, in order for the Human Rights Council to closely follow specific situations. Japan stresses the importance of full cooperation by every country with the activities of special rapporteurs, including continuous dialogue with the international community.

Concerning the DPRK, Japan seeks to normalize its relations with the DPRK, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, through comprehensively resolving the outstanding issues of concern with the DPRK, including the abduction, nuclear, and missile issues and settling the unfortunate past. Bearing in mind this policy, Japan urges the DPRK to improve its human rights situation, including the resolution of the abduction issue. In this regard, we appreciate the role of the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK in his efforts to bring about such improvements. Although the special rapporteur has not been permitted to enter the DPRK, the rapporteur has worked sincerely to address the task of improving human rights situation in the DPRK, and has played an significant role. Japan believes that the rapporteur's work needs to be continued and that it is therefore essential to renew the rapporteur's mandate in the current session of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. President,

Japan has for long years conducted dialogues with other countries that are making efforts towards the promotion of human rights. We intend to resolve various issues through dialogues. Since the improvement of human rights takes time, Japan emphasizes long-term commitment. We will continue to work together with other countries through support in response to need, including human resources development.

Japan is of the view that it would be effective to unite the efforts of the governments of countries in question with the efforts of their supporting civil societies. Support linked to the empowerment of civil society should be appropriate to the situation of a country in question. With the aim to link such support to the strengthening of civil society, last month, Japan organized a seminar on support for democratization for Japanese NGOs with the participation, among others, of Mr. Roland Rich, the Executive Head of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF).

Mr. President,

Japan supports "the mainstreaming of human rights" in a variety of areas, including peace

and development, in the United Nations. This is consistent with Japan's human security approach, which places values on protecting individuals and communities and enhancing capacity building. In 1960, my grand mother, Masa Nakayama, assumed the post of Minister of Health as the first female cabinet minister in Japan. For 48 years since then, Japan has been making efforts to strengthen the role of Women in the society. In addition to further strengthening of the standpoint of women, we wish to further expand the mainstreaming of human rights for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities.

Based on this concept, in September last year, Japan signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We are considering to ratify the Convention at as early a date as possible.

From our own domestic experience, Japan intends to take the initiative in eradicating discrimination against leprosy-affected persons and their families. Together with Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, who was appointed by Japan last year as the Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of People Affected by Leprosy, we wish to deepen the understanding of the international community concerning this issue.

In 2001, Japan hosted the 2nd "World Conference against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children". We welcome the official decision taken by Brazil to hold the 3rd "World Conference" in November this year. As the host of the 2nd "World Conference", Japan intends to extend the maximum possible cooperation in order to make the 3rd "World Conference" a success by working together with governments and relevant organizations involved.

Mr. President,

In order to secure fundamental human rights, it is essential to make efforts in a variety of areas including peace and development. The need for such efforts is particularly evident in Africa. Under the basic message of "Towards a Vibrant Africa," Japan will host the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) from 28th to 30th of May this year. One of the main priority items will be addressing the theme of

establishing human security. We intend to hold discussions on peace-building and democratization measures through development, measures toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and measures to strengthen support for democratization. We would like to ask everyone for their cooperation with this conference.

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Council has reached a threshold for determining whether or not it can become a truly effective organization. Japan's term of office as an original member of the Council will come to an end in May. However, in order to continue to make a positive contribution in the future, Japan intends to stand as a candidate at the next election for the Council. We hope we will receive the support of many nations.

The Human Rights Council, which has carried the hopes of the international community since its creation, must develop steadily. Japan will play a responsible role in the international community as a "Peace Fostering Nation" that contributes to world peace and development. We express our resolve to build the future of the Human Rights Council together with its fellow members of the international community.

I thank you for your attention.

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