

**Statement by H. E. Ambassador Hiroshi Minami,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations**

At the Twenty-ninth Special Session of the General Assembly

22 September 2014

Dr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Under-Secretary- General of the United Nations, and the other staff for their successful organization of this Special Session.

It is my honor to take this opportunity to review the developments since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, and to show our views and position toward the world beyond 2014.

The key to addressing population and development issues is, without a doubt, the empowerment of women. It is women who play a most important role in the human life cycle, from birth through old age. But they also are among the most vulnerable members of society. They need universal access to sexual and reproductive health services as well as to information and education. It is essential to ensure their fundamental rights.

The ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) has been serving as the international community's guideline on population and development issues. Based on a people-centered approach focusing on individuals, the ICPD PoA has promoted gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and has contributed to the achievement of human security, which is one of the most important guiding principles of Japan's development assistance strategy.

Japan fully supports the ICPD PoA and has long been committed to its implementation. Immediately after the Cairo Conference, we launched "Japan's Global Issues Initiative (GII) on Population and AIDS", a seven-year programme package amounting to 3

billion US dollars, to promote family planning, health education and HIV/AIDS prevention. It has been followed by various additional assistance packages focusing on sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, and the empowerment of women.

Japan continues to make contributions. The advancement of the roles of women has been and will continue to be one of the pillars of Japanese ODA. Last year, at the annual session of the UN General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Shinzo Abe, highlighted “womenomics” and pledged to implement assistance in excess of 3 billion US dollar over three years that places women at the center. As part of this pledge, just ten days ago Japan organized a symposium of the World Assembly for Women in Tokyo (WAW! Tokyo 2014).

Responding to the recent humanitarian crisis of the abduction of school girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria, Japan extended emergency grant aid amounting to 855,000 US dollars to UNFPA and other organizations to support the abducted school girls, their families and the affected communities.

Japan is also among the most active countries for international advocacy. The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP) was established in 1974 as the world’s first non-partisan organization committed to population issues. Since then it has made every effort to advocate for population issues in close cooperation with its counterparts around the world. The Government of Japan supports the activities of international parliamentarians through the Japan Trust Fund at UNFPA.

We also seek to contribute also to a fruitful debate to formulate the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Japan, in cooperation with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), has recently co-organized a side event entitled “Gender, HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in the Post-2015 Framework” in the margins of AIDS Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

We renew our commitment to contribute to the successful implementation of the framework of ICPD Beyond 2014.

Dr. Chairperson.

Toward the world beyond 2014, the international community must collaborate in order to cope with the many remaining and emerging challenges that it faces. Today we are

faced with rapid demographic changes and an increasingly diversified set of concerns.

In some regions, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, nations are still showing high increases in fertility. Many young people are suffering from challenges such as unemployment, malnutrition, and poor access to health services. It is essential to continue to provide support for those in need to satisfy their unmet needs, including sexual and reproductive health services as well as information and education.

On the other side of this spectrum, troublingly low fertility is found in some countries in regions such as East Asia and Europe. And many more countries in ASEAN and other regions are in turn following this trend as well. Because of these trends, the world is ageing. Even a region where the population is still young today will have to face an aged society in the near future.

An aging society without healthy longevity will encounter many problems, including an increasing cost of social security. It might even threaten global economic sustainability. Therefore is an important goal that we stay healthy even as we grow older. If coupled with healthy and active longevity; an ageing society can be a blessing.

The proportion of our population that is aged has become the highest in the world - currently 1 in 4 persons in Japan are older than 65 years of age. While major reforms have been and will continue to be planned to deal with the issues of an ageing society, Japan was ranked as first among countries in Healthy Life Expectancy in both 1990 and 2010, according to a study published in the Lancet magazine in 2012.

The realization in Japan of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as early as in 1961 surely played an important role in achieving the remarkable health and longevity of the Japanese people. UHC reaches the entire population, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized people, at all ages and generations. By seeking the elimination of disparities in access to essential health services, UHC can also contribute to inclusive economic growth.

Dr. Chairperson,

The world beyond 2014 must deal with diversified and complicated challenges and tasks. The tasks of ensuring maternal and child health; empowering women, girls and young people; providing sexual and reproductive health services; encouraging an economically active population; supporting an ageing society, etcetera....all lay upon our shoulders.

There may be no miracle solution. But one key element should be ensuring healthy lives for all at all ages. Throughout our life cycle, from childhood to adulthood to old age, health and wellness are human needs. The promotion of work-life balance, family friendly environments, coupled with measures toward gender equality, and the implementation of appropriate health systems as seen through the lens of UHC, should be essential components of our strategy.

Japan is ready to share its experiences and extend its support in this regard.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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