

Statement by Dr. Yoriko Meguro
Representative of Japan
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Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express my gratitude to Madam Chair, and the other members of the Bureau for your continued leadership.

Madam Chair,

Reaffirming its commitment to the principles and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, Japan recognizes the importance of continuing to carry out those activities that promote the empowerment of women to create gender-equal society at the domestic, regional, and international levels.

Japan also recognizes the importance of establishing partnerships that extend beyond borders. As announced one year ago in this forum, Japan hosted a ministerial-level meeting in Tokyo in 2006 in cooperation with sixteen national machineries established by our Asian neighbors and two international organizations in order to exchange views on gender equality policies.

At the end, we adopted the Tokyo Joint Ministerial Communiqué, which endorses sharing best practices, acknowledging the importance of achieving a work-life-balance, and strengthening national machineries in this area.

It was decided that the next meeting would be held this year in India and the third would be in the Republic of Korea. Japan would like to express its appreciation to the governments of those two countries for graciously offering to take these initiatives.

Japan is determined to take further steps to promote measures to realize gender equality, peace, and development throughout the world. Japan will do so in a unified manner on the basis of both the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society and the Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality.

In this statement, I would like to outline what Japan has been doing both inside and outside the country, especially with regard to the theme of the

current session of the Commission, "The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child".

Madam Chair,

In Japan we continue to improve education and systems of learning in order to encourage respect for rights based principles of gender equality, moving away from stereotyped gender role.

And we believe efforts should be made to encourage female junior high and high school students to enter the fields of science and technology, where their participation remains low.

To eliminate violence against the girl child, publicity and educational campaigns are being undertaken. Steps are also being taken to punish perpetrators of child abuse and child prostitution and protect the victims of such crimes.

In response to the increasing commercialization of sex and media violence, which violates the human rights of women and girls, measures are being promoted against illegal and harmful forms of communication such as child pornography on the Internet.

In December 2005, the "Prevention Program", which was designed with a view to preventing violence was added to Japan's Second Basic Plan for Gender Equality. This program is intended to help young people acquire problem-solving skills without relying on violence and thereby free the girl child from the threat of such harm.

Madam Chair,

In the field of international cooperation, Japan is making an effort to put an end to discrimination and violence against women through its Initiative on Gender and Development, which was launched in 2005 at the Beijing + 10.

In Ethiopia, for example, a program to improve basic education has been introduced that gives priority to closing the gap in enrollment of female and male students. As part of this program, restrooms for girls were installed, which has made it easier for them to attend school. We have received positive reports on this project to the effect that the number of girls in school is now increasing.

In Yemen, groups of fathers and mothers are being organized to promote girls' education, enabling local communities to take initiatives with respect to the education of their young. Parents' opinions are conveyed to school management and the message of the importance of educating girl child is delivered to all religious, community leaders as well as to fathers.

Japan is also providing reproductive health services through the trust fund of human security that particularly targets young women and girl children

of returnees and internally displaced persons in Eritrea. The clinics are reporting a growing number of young female patients. Taking into consideration of the traditional aspect of Eritrean culture, it is a sign that the project is helping to change society's view of young females.

Madam Chair,

In order to eliminate discrimination and violence against the girl child, it is vital to protect her from international trafficking. To that end, an inter-ministerial task force has been established on how the government as a whole might more actively and effectively address this issue. As Japan considers trafficking a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights, the Diet approved the conclusion of the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, and the penal code was amended in 2005 to directly criminalize the act of buying and selling of persons in addition to the Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children.

Japan has also dispatched government delegations to countries of origin to enhance cooperation with governments and NGOs in implementing anti-human trafficking measures.

To conclude, Madam Chair, Japan will continue to promote activities that contribute to "The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and Violence against the Girl Child" in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the effort to realize the Millennium Development Goals. It will do so in close partnership with international organizations and civil society, including NGOs.

I thank you, Madam Chair.