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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Junshiro Nishime
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**At the High Level Plenary
The Forty-Ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

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Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,

First of all, on behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to you, Madam Chair, on the assumption of your important role at this historic session. Let me also congratulate Ms. Rachel Mayanja on her appointment as the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement for Women, and express my sincere gratitude to the Division for the Advancement of Women all those who have so diligently prepared this session.

As Parliamentary Secretary of the Cabinet Office, the core national machinery for gender issues, I am in a position to promote relevant policies for gender equality and empowerment of women. I believe that the sincere commitment of women and men are essential to the realization of a truly gender-equal society. As a man, I therefore am very honored to attend this important session, which commemorates tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Madam Chair,

Since the First World Conference on Women, the international community has been making continuous efforts for the advancement of women, with the United Nations playing a central role, and considerable progress has been made. My delegation, however, is aware of the challenges and obstacles that remain for the international community.

At this session, we must recall the decisions made in the hope and spirit of cooperation and solidarity so ardently expressed ten years ago in Beijing. We must clearly define a course of action and initiatives to further implement the Beijing Platform for Action in order to attain international peace and prosperity.

Madam Chair,

For the ten years that have passed since the Fourth World Conference on Women, Japan has done its best to take concrete steps for the advancement of women following the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which has proven effective in protecting the human rights of women and promoting gender equality. I would like to focus on three aspects to review our endeavors in this respect.

1. Strengthening of the National Machineries in Japan

Firstly, I would like to report on the strengthening of the national machineries in Japan. In 2001, the Council for Gender Equality, chaired by the Chief Cabinet Secretary, who is also the Minister for Gender Equality, was established within the Cabinet Office as a new forum where ministers and intellectuals can share their knowledge and experience and discuss the broad range of issues related to gender equality. The Council was given a mandate to monitor the implementation status of government policies and to study and deliberate on the impact of government policies on the formation of a gender-equal society.

At the same time, the Gender Equality Bureau was established within the Cabinet Office and given responsibility for planning and coordinating the gender equality policies of the Government as a whole. By strengthening the national machineries, policies on gender equality are being implemented under the strong leadership of the Cabinet Office.

2. Progress Made in Legal and Administrative Measures for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Secondly, I would like to describe some of the progress made in new legal and administrative measures concerning gender equality and women's empowerment.

2-1. Enactment of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society

In 1999, the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society was promulgated in order to promote measures, comprehensively and deliberately by the state, local governments and citizens, for the realization of a gender-equal society. In accordance with this law, the Basic Plan for Gender Equality was formulated in 2000, taking into account the outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the UN General Assembly, "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century."

2-2. Women in Power and Decision-making

The Government of Japan is also taking initiatives to promote the participation of women in the policy and decision-making processes. Since 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi has appointed eight female ministers to his cabinet. Also, at the local level, there are four women governors currently holding office. These facts clearly show an increase in the political empowerment of women in Japan. Furthermore in 2003, the Japanese government set as a concrete goal that by the year 2020 women should occupy at least 30 percent of the leadership positions in all sectors of society.

2-3. Equal Employment, Balancing Work and Family and Fostering the Next Generation

Thirdly, I would like to touch upon the measures to ensure equal employment opportunities for both men and women and improve the balance between work and family life. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law, revised in 1997, prohibits discriminatory treatment against women throughout all stages of employment, from recruitment and hiring to retirement. In order to dissolve any existing de facto gender gap, the Government of Japan is also encouraging private companies to take “positive action.”

Furthermore the Japanese government has promoted the expansion of day-care facilities to support the balancing of work and household duties and responsibilities. Especially since 2002, under the strong initiative of Prime Minister Koizumi, the number of children accommodated at day-care facilities has increased by 50,000 every year.

Moreover, based upon the new General Action Plan to Support the Development of the Next Generation, the Government of Japan has promoted the participation of men in child-rearing and increased child-care support services. Local authorities and private companies are also obliged to establish and implement their own action plans to support child care and improve current working patterns.

2-4. Spousal Violence

Japan has also been making efforts to prevent violence against women. In April 2001, the comprehensive Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims was promulgated. In December 2004, an amended and strengthened law also took effect, and a basic policy was adopted in accordance with the amended law.

2-5. Trafficking in Persons

The Government of Japan recognizes trafficking in persons as a grave violation of human rights. In December 2004, “Japan’s Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons” was established in order to prevent and eradicate trafficking in persons and protect victims.

In addition, at its current session the Diet is considering the conclusion of the

Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, as well as an amendment to the Criminal Code criminalizing the act of trafficking in persons. The Diet is also considering a reform of the grounds for deportation and special permission to stay in the country under the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, in order to provide protection to the victims of trafficking.

3. International Cooperation

Finally, I would like to say a word about new initiatives my government is taking to enhance international cooperation towards gender mainstreaming.

Japan announced “The Initiative on Women in Development (WID)” at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Since then, it has been making a significant contribution to WID-related activities, especially in the areas of education, health, and the economic and social participation of women.

In this conjunction, the Japanese government drew up the “Initiative on Gender and Development (GAD),” with the idea of changing the environment surrounding women in developing countries and stressing the importance of gender mainstreaming in development. Under this new initiative, Japan will further strengthen its efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment of women in developing countries.

Madam Chair,

Japan has made substantial efforts to contribute to achieving international peace and prosperity, by financial means, such as through ODA, and also by providing human resources including PKO personnel.

I would like to conclude, Madam Chair, by affirming that Japan will further continue to promote policies enhancing the advancement of women and achieving gender equality at both the domestic and international levels, working in close partnership with international organizations and civil society, including NGOs.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.