

**Foreign Policy Association and Japan Society
Lecture by Ambassador Tsuneo Nishida
Permanent Representative of Japan to the UN
“Japan and the United Nations in a Turbulent World”
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Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

[1. Introduction]

It is truly an honour for me to be given this opportunity to address you on Japan’s engagement with the United Nations. I would like to express my gratitude to the Foreign Policy Association and the Japan Society for making today’s event possible. Also, thank you Roger for assuming the role of moderator.

It is always a pleasure to come to the Japan Society, not just because it is an institution dedicated to the promotion of Japanese culture, but also because of its proximity to the United Nations and the Mission of Japan. In fact, the Mission of Japan is grateful to undertake many events here at this beautiful facility with long history and reputation. One such event which I wish to mention in particular is the Photo Display and Symposium on the abduction issue held at the beginning of this month with the presence of the State Minister in charge as well as family members of the abductees.

The DPRK (North Korea) abduction issue is a major concern that affects not only the national sovereignty of Japan and the lives and safety of Japanese people, but it is also a human rights concern for the entire international community. Seventeen citizens have been identified by the Japanese Government as being victims of abduction and the DPRK has failed to provide credible accounts of the whereabouts and there are still many hundreds cases in which the possibility of abduction by the DPRK cannot be ruled out. In fact, this is “an act of terrorism” committed by the state.

Thanks to the cooperation of the Japan Society, the Symposium was a great success. I am quite confident that I will be in good hands for today's event as well. Actually, I am grateful that so many people have gathered today. I hope today's talk will give you useful insights on how the political environment surrounding the United Nations is changing and how Japan engages with the United Nations.

[2. A Turbulent World]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations lives and works in a turbulent world with huge challenges. Not a day goes by in which we do not hear news of the growing death tolls in Syria, nor do the provocative actions by the DPRK seem to have any end. Suicide bombs and acts of terrorism have become almost routine in many countries and regions.

The realities that we face today are obviously far different from what surrounded the United Nations when it was founded in the year 1945. If we look at the nature of conflicts around the world, conflicts within states including ones involving non-state actors have increased dramatically over that time. The recent uproars witnessed in Northern Africa and in the Middle East are all good examples of conflicts of this nature.

Furthermore, it is not just the nature of conflicts that has changed. The advancement of globalization has presented the world with new and pressing challenges requiring a holistic and comprehensive approach. Terrorism, piracy, violation of human rights, issues related to women and youth, and migration are just some of the new tasks the United Nations and its Member States need to address.

Shifts in the balance of political and economic power among Member States are another important aspect that cannot be disregarded. The economic and financial crisis, which started in the United States and spread to Europe, has become a heavy drag on the influence of developed countries in the United Nations. At the same time, emerging and developing countries are gaining an even more significant voice. These countries include not just the “BRICs” or the “Next 11”, but even smaller countries rack their brains to increase their leverage. The LDCs (Least Developed Countries) and SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) are examples of groups of such developing countries that by gathering their voices together are increasingly stepping onto the main world stage. I think it is fair to say the world has become more fragmented and multi-polar or even non-polar.

As we can see, the global landscape is becoming a very complex one. As the most universal and representative international institution, hopes remain that the United Nations can continue to facilitate action through integrated solutions to challenges the international society has to confront.

Unfortunately, it is also true that disappointment and frustration about the ineffectiveness and opacity of the United Nations are growing. The passion that everyone embraced when the United Nations was founded or when the Cold War collapsed, is rapidly fading as it passes over difficult situations such as Syria or Darfur, or the lack of coordination within UN organs hamper timely and coordinated solutions to the complexity of tasks.

The United Nations today finds itself caught between these mixed feelings of hope and disappointment in a time of crises and disarrays. Japan believes and wants to believe the United Nations can deliver more, still being the most viable means to cope with today's agenda. But for that, the United Nations needs to readjust itself to the new environment and demonstrate that it is able to take the lead in creating the "Future We Want."

[3. Japan and the United Nations]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan has maintained a passion for multilateralism and respect for international order since its accession to the United Nations in 1956. It has consistently supported the work of the United Nations even in the face of hard times and not only do we provide a substantial portion of financial contributions on which the organization runs, but we also often take the lead in discussions on the various issues we face.

Let me now touch upon some of the major engagements by Japan in the United Nations starting with Japan's contribution to the maintenance of peace and security, and support for social and economic development, to efforts for the protection and promotion of human rights and Japan's commitment to UN Reform.

[(1) Maintenance of Peace and Security]

First, preventing armed conflict, keeping peace, and rebuilding war-torn states remain among the most intractable challenges facing the United Nations. Every year, at least 250,000 people die in intra-state armed conflicts and according to the World Bank, up to 100 billion US Dollars are spent in conflicts. The United Nations has evolved over the years to effectively respond to the new and complex crises. Peacekeeping operations (PKO) have become more robust and multidimensional.

The latest example of this evolving response by the United Nations is the adoption of the first-ever “offensive” combat force targeted to “neutralize and disarm” rebel groups (M23) in the DRC. The cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations such as the AU has also evolved notably, as we can witness in the dispatch of the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Furthermore, in an effort to foster integrated strategies for sustainable peace and recovery in the aftermath of armed conflict, the United Nations established a new commission called the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2005 under the auspices of both the General Assembly and the Security Council. In addition to that, the Department for Field Support was created in 2007 to manage the logistical aspects of PKO more effectively.

How does Japan fit into these efforts? Throughout its 20 year history in PKO, Japan has dispatched contingents and personnel to 13 PKO missions around the world including Timor-Leste, Haiti and South Sudan. In South Sudan, Japanese engineering units are now supporting nation building efforts for the youngest nation, 193rd Member State, in the world. In order to share lessons learned from its valuable experiences as an early peacebuilder, Japan hosted a seminar here at the Japan Society on “the evolving roles of engineering units in UN peacekeeping operations” in March.

Japan has actively engaged in peacebuilding as well. Japan has been a committed member of the PBC since its inception and currently serves as the Chair of the Commission’s Working Group on Lessons Learned. Japan is also one of the main partners to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) contributing approximately 32.5 million US Dollars. Peacebuilding is a long process, and not even an easy one. We have witnessed in not a few countries that holding elections has reversed course back to another conflict.

Needless to mention the tragic memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan is strongly committed to disarmament and non-proliferation. In order to urge the international community to continue its untiring effort to realize a world without nuclear weapon, Japan has been leading negotiations for adopting resolutions on this topic at the UN General Assembly, on an annual basis since the year of 1994. Last year, the resolution proposed by Japan gathered 99 co-sponsors and support by 174 Member States.

People are mostly killed not by WMD but by conventional weapons. A landmark adoption was achieved on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) this April at the United Nations. As one of the 7 co-authors which initiated the process 7 years ago, Japan worked strenuously to bridge gaps among Member States to agree on a treaty text which will enhance transparency and accountability of the international transfer of arms. I am more than happy that the Arms Trade Treaty was adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States and that the signing ceremony will take place next week in New York. Japan will continue to support global and regional efforts to reduce harm and crime caused by the irresponsible transfer of conventional weapons.

All UN Member States need to be fully involved in effectively implementing UN Security Council resolutions in the area of sanctions, non-proliferation and disarmament. Proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms always seek vulnerable borders and yet national regulations and concerted efforts among States are essential to avoid loopholes. In this regard, the Mission of Japan together with the Missions of Poland and Turkey, regularly organizes a series of conferences called the “Turtle Bay Security Roundtable” at the Japan Society to address such issues. Many UN diplomats find great value in stepping outside the UN and into this beautiful setting, to have interactive exchanges of views with many stakeholders like academia, NGO’s and businesses. Our Mission plans to convene the next session again at the Japan Society on June 10.

It would be inappropriate not to touch on the DPRK when talking about disarmament and non-proliferation. Tensions rose extremely when the DPRK launched a long-range missile in December last year, and then conducted a nuclear test in February this year. The DPRK’s nuclear and missile development programs pose serious threat to the entire international community and must not be treated as a regional problem. Japan strongly urges the DPRK to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions and not to conduct any further provocative acts.

Terrorism continues to be one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. Let me recall and condemn once again the terrorist attack in In Amenas, Algeria, where 10 Japanese citizens were killed, and the latest tragedy at the Boston Marathon. In reaction to those incidents, Japan has announced plans to further strengthen international counter-terrorism measures, support stabilizing the regions of the Sahel, North Africa and the Middle East and promote dialogue and exchanges with Islamic and Arab states. No country is immune from terrorism, thus global and tight enforcement of comprehensive and coordinated responses is crucial. Japan has been playing central role in helping Afghan people rebuild their own country as the 2nd biggest donor after the US. Last year's Tokyo Conference has successfully launched the "Tokyo Framework", aiming at the years after international troops' withdrawal.

[(2) Social and Economic Development]

Social and Economic development is another stated pillars of the United Nations. While we have less than 1000 days until the target date for the achievement of the “Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”, Japan has been working hard to accelerate efforts towards achievement of the MDGs through a number of initiatives, including ones in education and health.

At the same time, Japan has substantively contributed to the discussions on the formulation of the development agenda beyond 2015, by organizing an informal policy dialogue group called the Post-MDGs Contact Group as well as by actively supporting the UN Development Group in conducting a series of thematic and regional consultations with various stakeholders including civil society, the private sector and women and youth. Japan is of the view that the new development agenda framework should be established through an inclusive process; which establishes a set of simple, clear and measurable goals; addresses emerging and re-emerging challenges; keeps in mind a body of guiding concepts such as human security, equity, sustainability and resilience; and prioritizes those items that we truly need to accomplish.

When talking about the post-2015 development agenda, sustainability is a key concept. We cannot achieve poverty eradication, which is our ultimate goal in the post-2015 development agenda, without ensuring sustainability. Sustainability was intensively discussed during Rio+20, a landmark conference held last year that focused on green economy in the context of sustainable development, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Using this opportunity, Japan announced its “Green Future Initiatives” proposing to explore sustainable growth.

Climate change is one of many major challenges in the context of sustainable development. It continues to be a pressing issue for the international society and in particular to the most vulnerable including small island states. In order to address climate change, negotiations for the establishment of a fair and effective international framework in which every major economy participates are crucial. At the same time, concerted efforts by every Member State to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, without waiting for the establishment of such a framework, are required. Japan announced “Japan’s Vision and Action toward Low-Carbon Growth and a Climate Resilient World” at COP17 held in South Africa in 2011, and has actively advanced both regional and bilateral efforts.

As part of Japan's engagement in development, let me also mention TICAD V. TICAD stands for "Tokyo International Conference for African Development." The TICAD process was launched in 1993 as the first high-level policy dialogue framework between African leaders and development partners including the United Nations, on issues facing Africa. Since then, it has evolved into a major framework for the promotion of development in Africa, under the principles of "ownership" and "partnership." TICAD V is going to be held from this weekend in Yokohama, under the overarching theme of "Hand in Hand with a More Dynamic Africa." I believe that TICAD V will mark an important threshold in Japan's contribution to development.

[(3) Promotion and Protection of Human Rights]

“Promoting and encouraging respect for human rights” is another major pillar stipulated in the UN Charter. Endurable peace and prosperity is not achievable if such a universal value as human rights is undermined. As a country mindful of the importance of human rights, Japan is actively engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights as a member of the Human Rights Council for the term 2013 to 2015.

Still today, we are unfortunately witnessing many grave human rights violations in the world. Japan is actively engaged in the efforts of the United Nations to address and overcome those situations. One example is the situation in Syria. From the outset, Japan has been consistently supporting and co-sponsoring the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council resolutions on Syria’s human rights situation. Japan is deeply concerned by the increasingly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria. Japanese humanitarian assistance has now totalled 80.5 million US dollars. While addressing the appalling human rights and humanitarian crisis, the international community needs to take coordinated action in order to end all violence and bring about a Syrian-led political transition.

Japan will continue to support diplomatic efforts by Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the UN and the League of Arab States, and strongly hopes that the upcoming International Conference on Syria, or the so-called Geneva II Conference, will be held successfully with a view to finding a political solution for this crisis.

Another example of widespread and systematic violations of human rights is the situation with DPRK. Allow me to underline the graveness of the situation. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, stated that “the deplorable human rights situation in DPRK, which in one way or another affects almost the entire population and has no parallel anywhere else in the world”, which “may amount to crimes against humanity”. Human rights situations in DPRK, including the abduction issue is something we all must address together. Japan has worked assiduously for international support.

For many years, Japan, together with the EU, has introduced resolutions on the human rights situation in DPRK to the UN General Assembly on an annual basis. Furthermore, last March, the Human Rights Council in Geneva adopted the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on the DPRK human rights situation by consensus. I sincerely hope the Commission of Inquiry will be successful in its work. Japan will cooperate in every way for that sake.

In addition to country-specific questions, cross-cutting issues are also at the heart of the United Nations. Advancement of women, who account for half of the world population, is one of the key issues. A number of fora at the United Nations have been addressing economic, social and political disparities that women are faced today. And further, the Security Council highlights gender issues through its thematic debates calling for concrete actions to end violence and discrimination against women. In order to respond to these international calls, Japan has not just incorporated the gender perspective of women in its ODA policy, but has also recently announced a new contribution of 4.5 million US Dollars for programs to prevent sexual violence and support victims in countries such as Libya, Somalia, Central African Republic and Mali.

[(4) UN Reform]

I have briefly explained how Japan engages in the three pillars of the United Nations, namely maintenance of peace and security, social and economic development and the protection of human rights. But let us not forget about UN Reform.

The different issues I have touched upon are in fact all inter-connected and therefore a holistic and coordinated approach is required to resolve them. Although initiatives to implement a reform agenda such as the “Change Management Team” announced by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is mostly welcome, the United Nations, like any large organization, public or private, struggles to adapt to new realities in a timely manner. Thus frustration is mounting, as the organization seems to be unable to function effectively as expected.

Particularly, the Security Council is one such organ that has not changed significantly from its original form despite profound changes in global realities. Security Council Reform is long overdue and it is high time for all Member States to start real negotiations with a sense of urgency and in a spirit of trust and flexibility.

[Conclusion]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that my talk today has provided you with a clearer picture of Japan's engagement with the United Nations in a time of global change. But before concluding, I would like to refer to two concepts that are of great importance to today's world, namely the "Rule of Law" and "Human Security".

The importance of the "Rule of Law" cannot be overemphasized. In the face of new and complex challenges, the "Rule of Law" is a core principle of governance that ensures justice, stability and predictability. Japan has continuously believed in the "Rule of Law" and contributes to strengthening it. In fact, Japan is supporting major international judicial institutions, namely the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), both in human resources and financial terms. Our support to adhoc tribunals including the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia also shows Japan's belief in the "Rule of Law". In addition, Japan has extended support in developing legal systems and human resources in various developing countries. The "Rule of Law" is an essential precondition for lasting peace, stability and global prosperity. However, we cannot yet claim that the Rule of Law has been fully respected in today's world.

It is of particular importance that the “Rule of Law” is applied in territorial and maritime disputes, of which there are still a number in many parts of the world. I would like to underscore the foremost principle that we must settle disputes and re-establish order and stability not by force but by addressing them based on the “Rule of Law.” Any attempts of coercion or intimidation must not be tolerated and all countries concerned should exercise as much self-restraint as possible.

“Human Security” is also a concept particularly relevant in today’s global environment. It is a new and developing concept, which focuses on individuals instead of states and pursues ways to provide better conditions for them to live healthy, dignified, fulfilling lives they are entitled to. “Human Security” is effective in helping vulnerable people suffering in countries where government often dysfunctions, by empowering them and their communities, “free from fear”, “free from want” and “live with dignity”. Japan has been promoting “Human Security” in UN activities through the UN Trust Fund for Human Security. The adoption of a General Assembly resolution last September, which establishes a common understanding of the concept, was a major breakthrough to further promote “Human Security”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's complex and turbulent world does not simply allow us to be neither optimist nor pessimist. Every and each country, as a responsible partner, has to cooperate hand in hand to establish a just and fair international order and achieve the "Future We Want" for the next generations to come. The road towards that goal is long and bumpy, but I believe the United Nations, despite on-going efforts towards its reform, is still currently the most viable vehicle to take us to the desired destination.

Thank you for your attention.