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**Consideration of the Report Submitted by Japan under Article 29(1) of the Convention
for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**

**Opening statement by H.E. Yoshifumi OKAMURA,
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Madame la Présidente,
Membres distingués du Comité des disparitions forcées,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

A l'occasion de l'examen du premier rapport du Japon, je souhaiterais, au nom de la délégation japonaise, saluer les efforts incessants fournis par le comité afin de résoudre la question des disparitions forcées.

Il y a tout juste un an, je me tenais devant vous en tant que chef de délégation japonaise lors de la session de notre examen périodique universel au cours de laquelle, j'avais tenu à préciser les efforts fournis par le Japon ainsi que le suivi des recommandations qui avaient été faites.

C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de me retrouver devant vous à l'occasion d'un dialogue que j'espère constructif sur les efforts déployés par le Japon quant à la mise en application de la convention pour la protection de toutes les personnes contre les disparitions forcées.

Avant tout chose, permettez-moi d'insister sur un point d'une grande importance. Depuis la ratification par le Japon de la Convention pour la protection de toutes les personnes contre les disparitions forcées, aucun acte criminel comprenant les trois éléments constitutifs d'une disparition forcée, au sens de l'article 2 de la Convention, et impliquant le Gouvernement japonais, n'a été commis sous contrôle japonais. En effet, de nombreux programmes destinés à sanctionner les disparitions forcées ainsi qu'à prévenir de tels actes existent déjà dans le système législatif japonais. Tous les détails les concernant figurent dans notre rapport ainsi que dans les réponses à la liste des points qui ont été soulevés. Aujourd'hui, avant d'entamer un dialogue constructif avec les honorables membres du Comité, le Gouvernement japonais souhaite réaffirmer sa volonté de veiller à ce qu'aucun cas de disparition forcée ne puisse jamais se produire au Japon.

La disparition forcée est une violation extrêmement grave des droits de l'homme.

Malheureusement, des cas de disparition forcée ont été signalés dans le monde entier. Bien que le Japon n'ait jamais connu de cas de disparition forcée impliquant son propre gouvernement, il a néanmoins souffert de l'enlèvement de ses ressortissants, ce qui constitue un cas avéré de disparition forcée. Du fait de cette expérience, le Japon comprend parfaitement les souffrances des victimes. Les enlèvements de citoyens japonais par la Corée du Nord sont un sujet de préoccupation grave pour la souveraineté du Japon, ainsi que pour la vie et la sécurité de ses citoyens. En même temps, cette violation flagrante des droits fondamentaux de l'homme, que constitue l'enlèvement de citoyens japonais par la Corée du Nord, demeure une question universelle pour la communauté internationale. Le gouvernement du Japon a recensé 17 citoyens japonais ayant été enlevés par la Corée du Nord durant les années 1970 et 1980. Cependant, seulement cinq d'entre-elles sont rentrées chez elle. A l'occasion d'un discours durant la soixante-treizième session de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, le Premier ministre, Monsieur Shinzo Abe, a réitéré sa détermination à résoudre ce problème, en déclarant: «nous ramènerons au Japon toutes les personnes qui ont été enlevées».

In order to universalize the criminalization of enforced disappearance including abductions, it is indispensable to gain understanding and cooperation among the international community. The Government of Japan recognizes that the Convention is beneficial in affirming in the international community that enforced disappearance is a crime and perpetrators should be punished, and it is also important for preventing recurrence of such crimes in the future. In addition, the Convention is significant in arousing international attention to the issue of enforced disappearance, including abductions. With that recognition, Japan signed the Convention on 6 February 2007, becoming the first state in the Asia-Pacific region to do so. After its signature, the Convention was discussed in the House of Representatives on 12 May 2009 and in the House of Councillors on 10 June of the same year. Both Houses unanimously approved the ratification of the Convention. Based on such broad support, Japan deposited the instrument of ratification of the Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 23 July 2009. Japan takes pride in being a State Party to this Convention since its entry into force. It is also our great honor to have an opportunity to participate in the consideration of the report before this distinguished Committee. Japan looks forward to engaging in constructive dialogue with the distinguished members of the Committee today and tomorrow.

Japan is fully aware that the Committee made its commitment in 2017 to double the number of States Parties to the Convention within five years. Indeed, increasing the number of States Parties is a pressing issue. The Government of Japan is making steadfast efforts to promote the universal ratification of the Convention. For instance, Japan is active in conducting outreach activities to encourage non-State Parties, especially in the Asia-Pacific, to conclude the Convention, including by making recommendations at Universal and Periodic Review sessions. Moreover, in February this year, Japan co-sponsored the International Seminar on

Enforced Disappearances in Strasbourg, which was hosted by *Fondation René Cassin* together with the Council of Europe. Dr. Suela Janina, Chairperson of the Committee, Professor Emmanuel Decaux, member of the Committee, and Professor Kimio Yakushiji, former member of the Committee, participated in this seminar as panelists and there were many attendees from diplomatic missions, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, academia and the press. Taking this opportunity, Mr. Takamasa Sato, Consul-General of Japan in Strasbourg, renewed Japan's support for the Committee's commitment. The Government of Japan will take various initiatives to promote ratification of the Convention by non-States Parties.

Furthermore, there has been a Japanese member on the Committee since its inauguration. Professor Kimio Yakushiji of Ritsumeikan University made a significant contribution to the work of the committee for six years from 2012 to 2017 as a member from Asia. Since 2017, Professor Koji Teraya of the Graduate School of the University of Tokyo has also served as a member. Although they are independent from the Government, the fact that members from Japan are contributing to the activities of the Committee based on their rich expertise and experience in the area of international human rights law is of great value to Japan, as a country tirelessly promoting human rights diplomacy.

Last but not least, the Government of Japan provided voluntary contributions amounting to 100 million Japanese yen to OHCHR for supporting initiatives on the protection of people from enforced disappearance in 2018. Japan hopes that our contributions will be effectively utilized for the activities of the Committee towards universalization of the Convention.

Madame Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Japan is keen to lead discussions in the international community on prevention and solution of the issue of enforced disappearance. The Japanese delegation is ready to provide answers with the utmost sincerity on any matters of concern you may have during this important constructive dialogue. We look forward to fruitful discussions today and tomorrow.

Thank you very much.