

Consideration of the Government of Japan's Seventh Periodic Report under the International  
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

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**<DDG Imafuku>**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Human Rights  
Committee,

Good afternoon. We are delighted to finally be back here today for the consideration of the Seventh Periodic Report of the Government of Japan under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) after eight years since our last session. On behalf of the Japanese delegation, I would like to express our sincere respect for the Human Rights Committee for its continuous and tireless efforts towards ensuring the observance of civil and political rights. I would also like to express our appreciation for the dedication of everyone involved to convene this in-person dialogue that has been postponed for over two years due to the COVID pandemic. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude in advance for the support extended by the Committee, the Secretariat, the technicians, and the UN interpreters to accommodate our Japanese interpreters.

First of all, I would like to introduce Ambassador HONSEI Kozo, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of our Permanent Mission here in Geneva, who will make some initial remarks. Ambassador, the floor is yours.

<Amb. Honsei>

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Committee, good afternoon. It is my pleasure to make the opening address on the occasion of this review, the first in eight years.

Of the State Parties for consideration at this 136th session of the Human Rights Committee, by far the largest number of civil society reports have been submitted on Japan. I see in the audience a very large number of participants from Japan are here today as well. I feel that this showcases the high level of interest in the ICCPR, one of the most fundamental and comprehensive human rights treaties, and in Japan's efforts to implement the Covenant.

The Government of Japan has taken the concluding observations seriously and has made efforts to promote human rights, improve policies, and raise awareness in various areas. We intend to continue to make efforts to address challenges based on the outcome of our dialogue during this session.

Japan believes that human rights are universal values and that the protection of human rights is the basic responsibility of all countries. Based on this belief, Japan has been promoting human rights diplomacy through dialogue and cooperation.

Dialogue is also valued in this State Party review, and we will do our best to make the discussion a fruitful one. Thank you.

<DDG Imafuku>

Thank you, Ambassador. As the Ambassador noted, the Government of Japan has been making vigorous efforts to protect and promote human rights. Against this backdrop, the Government of Japan submitted to the Human Rights Committee its seventh periodic report on domestic implementation of the rights protected by the ICCPR in 2020.

A number of Ministries and Agencies have engaged in the preparation of the report. At the same time, the Government also recognizes the importance of dialogue with civil society in promoting human rights. Therefore, in preparing for this review, the Government made its best effort to have occasions to engage in dialogue with civil society in various formats, including a webinar with the Japan Federation of Bar Associations on September 14. We appreciate the active involvement of the relevant Ministries and Agencies as well as civil society.

We have continued our efforts to further protect, promote and advocate for human rights from various perspectives following the submission of our report. Over the next two days, we look forward to holding a meaningful, constructive dialogue with the Committee members. Since the review was postponed for more than two years due to COVID-19, I would first like to briefly share with you some recent specific efforts made by the Government of Japan regarding the ICCPR, especially in the areas pointed out in the concluding observations of our previous session.

### <Gender Equality>

The realization of gender equality and the promotion of women's empowerment are important issues for our country. From that perspective, the Civil Code has been amended, and the period of time during which women are barred from remarrying has been shortened since 2016. In addition, the minimum age for marriage has been set at 18 years old, the same for both men and women, from April 2022.

Furthermore, in order to further narrow the gender wage gap, since July this year, employers with 301 or more regular workers are required to disclose information on gender wage differences.

Moreover, with the aim of sharing the efforts and good practices of each country in solving various issues in the gender field, Japan will hold the World Assembly for Women, or WAW!, in December under the theme of "WAW! for Mainstreaming Gender into a New Form of Capitalism."

### <Rights of Minorities>

Japan has been undertaking efforts to protect the rights of minorities, including the following:

In 2016, the Government of Japan introduced the Hate Speech Elimination Act, which declares that unfair discriminatory words and actions against persons with countries of origin other than Japan will not be tolerated, with the aim of eliminating unfair discriminatory speech and behavior.

The Human Rights Bodies of the Ministry of Justice provide human rights counseling at Legal Affairs Bureaus nationwide, and effective from this summer, counseling is available in approximately 80 languages to make it easier for foreign nationals living in Japan to use these services.

Furthermore, in order to further promote understanding of Ainu history and culture, in July 2020, “Upopoy,” the National Ainu Museum and Park, was opened as a national center for revitalizing and developing Ainu culture.

<Criminal Procedure Code, Penal Code >

On the Penal Code and criminal procedures, we have made the following progress:

First, in order to enable responses that are reflective of the current state of sexual crimes, the Penal Code was amended in 2017 to allow prosecution without a complaint by the victims. This will reduce the burden on victims and lead to more effective response to sexual crimes.

Japan is taking proactive action to make audiovisual recordings of interrogations. During the fiscal year 2021, audiovisual recordings were made for approximately 94 percent of in-custody questioning conducted by the public prosecutors.

<Technical Intern Training Program>

The technical intern training program is significant in that it makes an international contribution by transferring skills, technologies, and knowledge accumulated in Japan to developing countries, and by cooperating in human resources development to drive

the economic development of those countries. To ensure proper operation of the program, on-site inspections are conducted at relevant organizations. In fiscal year 2021, more than 28,000 such on-site inspections were carried out.

The Government as a whole will continue to carefully discuss how to properly implement this program to ensure that trainees are received appropriately.

#### <Refugee Recognition Procedures>

As part of our refugee recognition procedures, we granted convention refugee status or special permission based on humanitarian consideration for 654 persons in 2021. This number has more than tripled compared to the last review in 2014. Generally speaking, during the procedures, hardly any of the applicants are kept in detention, even if they do not have residential status. In addition to the refugee recognition procedures, almost 2,000 evacuees from Ukraine have been accepted as of the end of September 2022.

We are striving to avoid detention in deportation proceedings as much as possible, and to ensure that in cases where detention is deemed necessary the duration is kept as short as possible. As of the end of 2021, among persons to whom a written order of detention or deportation has been issued, the ratio of those detained by the Immigration Bureau was less than two percent. In addition, the average detention period for those who were subject to deportation proceedings in 2021 was approximately 80 days.

Furthermore, to resolve the issue of long-term detention, the Government is considering to amend the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act to legally define alternatives to detention and to further improve the treatment of detainees.

Last year, a Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for International Human Rights Affairs was appointed to promote efforts related to human rights.

Madam Chair, Distinguished members of the Human Rights Committee,

In the eight years since our last review, the Government of Japan has made efforts to promote human rights, improve policies, and raise awareness in various areas because we take the Committee's concluding observations seriously. We will continue to make efforts to ensure that civil and political rights are respected and secured.

The Japanese delegation is ready to respond in good faith to any questions and issues of interest, making best use of the valuable opportunity presented by these two days. We look forward to constructive discussions with all of you.

Thank you.

(End)

