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At the High-level Meeting on the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the  
Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries  
For the Decade 2001-2010

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Madame President,  
Distinguished Representatives of States,  
Representatives of International Organizations,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Chowdhury and the officials of the Secretariat of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the enormous work they put into the preparations for this midterm review.

In the five years since the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries took place, efforts by the Least Developed Countries and development partners have resulted in improvements in the rate of economic growth and other development indices such as life expectancy and the child mortality rate. Nevertheless many people in the Least Developed Countries are still mired in poverty and suffering from its many effects.

That is why this midterm review is so significant, reaffirming as it does our commitment to achieving the goals and targets set by the Brussels Programme of Action. Japan understands the problems the Least Developed Countries are facing. It is endeavoring to help address them on a number of fronts, and Japan is determined to make even greater efforts within the framework of international cooperation. I would like to take this opportunity to outline

Japan's basic ideas and the concrete steps it has taken to achieve the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Madame President,

Japan knows from its own experience how important are the roles ownership and partnership play at each stage of development. Japan achieved its current prosperity because of the efforts made by each Japanese citizen. In other words, the driving force in nation-building is the commitment of individual citizens and their strong belief in the future of their country. The foundation of Japan's development was its ownership of development, that is to say, we undertook and achieved our development through our own efforts. However, Japan also benefited from a partnership of the international community. Not long time ago, Japan was receiving assistance from other countries and organizations. Its present support for the Least Developed Countries is extended based on the understanding of the importance of both ownership and partnership.

To provide useful assistance to the Least Developed Countries, it is also important to take a human-centered point of view whose paramount objective is protecting people against threats such as poverty, hunger and infectious disease while at the same time seeking to empower them to deal with these threats by themselves. From the perspective of this concept of human security, Japan places emphasis on supporting the basic social services as one of the keys to helping the poor, and has made substantial contributions to work being done in the areas of education, health, water and sanitation, and gender, which are the core of the Brussels Programme of Action.

For all these reasons, Japan shouldered one fifth the entire volume of ODA through the 1990s. Last year, Prime Minister Koizumi announced that Japan would increase its ODA volume by US\$10 billion in aggregate over the course of five years, and double its ODA to Africa in the course of three years. Japan is committed to providing assistance that really meets the needs of the beneficiaries, placing emphasis on promoting ownership by the Least Developed Countries and coordination with other development partners.

Madame President,

Trade and investment are engines of economic growth, which is why Japan launched the "Development Initiative for Trade" prior to the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Conference held in December last year. This initiative aims to provide comprehensive and cross-sectoral support at each stage of the trading cycle--produce, sell, and buy—and to that

end, Japan has already begun the domestic procedures necessary to provide duty-free and quota-free market access to essentially all products originating from the Least Developed Countries as soon as fiscal year 2007 or thereafter. The interruption of the WTO Doha Round is a genuine disappointment in that its purpose was to enable developing countries to derive greater benefit from trade. Japan is determined, however, to do whatever it can to restart the negotiations, and intends to move steadily forward with implementation of the Development Initiative for Trade, regardless of the results of the Doha Round.

Debt relief is another important issue. Many of the Least Developed Countries suffer from excessive debt, a major obstacle to achieving sustainable development. Japan provides US\$2.6 billion debt relief to 29 highly indebted poor countries, one-fourth the total volume of assistance from G7 countries. In addition, we welcome the implementation of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiatives introduced by IMF, IDA and AfDF, and intend to act on them promptly, staying with them until they are fully carried out.

Finally, I would like to explain Japan's policy on aid to Africa. The continent of Africa is the key to solving the problems of the Least Developed Countries, as 34 of the 50 LDCs are there, many of them facing the challenges of poverty and armed conflict. Recognizing that "there will be no stability and prosperity in the world in the 21st century unless the problems of Africa are resolved," Japan has provided it with substantial assistance. Prime Minister Koizumi visited Ethiopia and Ghana in this past spring, a clear demonstration of Japan's concern about the problems of Africa. Japan assists development there mainly in three areas, namely, "consolidation of peace", "poverty reduction through economic growth", and "human-centered development" through TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development), focusing on the ownership of Africa and the partnership of the international community. We will continue to contribute to the realization of the development of Africa in TICAD IV, which is scheduled to be held in 2008.

In conclusion, I believe the Declaration we shall adopt at this midterm Review will serve as a set of guidelines for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, and Japan will therefore act in accordance with the Declaration as it makes further efforts to see that the Programme of Action is carried out.

Thank you very much.