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Statement by H.E. Mr. Kiyohiko Toyama
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
At the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

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New York

Madame President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

It is essential that every society be fair in the way it receives and treats people from other countries. Societies should promote cultural diversity and strive for openness, flexibility and more mobile workforces. Migrants, in turn, can contribute to the development of their countries of origin by gaining skills and engaging in economic activity. Many issues must be resolved, however, in order for international migration to be of benefit to migrants and their countries of origin and destination. For that to happen, not only must countries make efforts within their national frameworks; they must engage in international cooperation. This High-level Dialogue is therefore most timely, and, on behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to thank the United Nations for its initiative in convening it.

The preamble of the Constitution of Japan states that "[we] recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want." This is the basis for the idea of human security Japan has been promoting, which has as its goal protecting people and giving them the power to protect themselves. Japan believes that, in the interest of human security for all people, it is important to combine the following two approaches to international migration. First, we must protect people who have been forced to leave their homes because of threats to their well-being and also empower them, so that they can better withstand adversity. Second, we must protect people migrating in search of better lives and create environments where they can realize their potential in accordance with law and regulations of countries of destination. The basic precondition for creating a positive link between migration and development is to take action on both of these fronts, paying particular attention to the needs of women, children and other vulnerable members of society.

Allow me to expand on this idea. First, Japan has implemented numerous projects in other countries aimed at empowering communities where people have been forced to flee their homes due to conflicts, natural disasters, human trafficking, organized crime and other major threats to their safety. These projects, which include aid for refugees and victims of human trafficking as well as advocacy activities, are being conducted with financial and technical assistance from Japan and financing from the United Nations Trust Fund of Human Security, established in 1999 as the result of a Japanese initiative to help UN agencies carry out activities in this area.

In addition, Japan is implementing its Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons adopted in 2004 in the areas of prevention, law enforcement and protection. Japan is also exchanging views with Governments, NGOs and international organizations in Asia, Europe and Latin America to pursue effective ways of preventing human trafficking. Japan is also actively participating in the Bali Process, a regional framework in Asia and the Pacific to help combat illegal immigration, human smuggling and trafficking and related transnational crimes.

Migrants can contribute to the development of both their countries of origin and destination through their economic activity, their technical skills and capital they can provide. In order to realize such a win-win situation, however, migrants should both abide by and be afforded due protection under the laws of their countries of origin, transit and destination. Moreover, international cooperation to support the development of the capacity of each individual is necessary for migrants to enjoy the maximum benefit from migration.

For these reasons, Japan has extended cooperation to developing countries with a view to enhancing human resources in education and health. For example, Japan has offered assistance in teacher training and the improvement of teaching manuals, curricula and textbooks. In the health sector, this cooperation has taken the form of training medical and counseling staff engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In addition, for over forty years the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have been sent to developing countries to participate at the grassroots level in the community- and nation-building efforts. Based on this experience, Japan has just launched, in cooperation with the UNV, the Asia Youth Volunteers Programme for Africa to promote the exchange of volunteers between the two continents.

The issue of international migration and development is a critical global challenge. Japan therefore regards this High-level Dialogue as a significant step for all of us. Upon its conclusion, we, the international community, need to deepen our dialogue and strengthen our cooperation. Japan is committed to working towards both those ends.

Thank you very much.