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AS WRITTEN

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ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY YOHEI KONO

HEAD OF THE JAPANESE DELEGATION

TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR FOREIGN FOR AFFAIRS

CAIRO

6 SEPTEMBER 1994

Address by His Excellency Yohei Kono  
Head of the Japanese Delegation  
to the International Conference  
on Population and Development  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

6 September 1994

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to have this opportunity to express Japan's views as to what should be accomplished at this Conference and to describe briefly the policies and programmes Japan has adopted to deal with global population issues. First, however, I would like to express my appreciation to the Government of Egypt, which is hosting this Conference, the UNFPA staff, and to everyone else who has worked so hard to ensure the success of the Conference.

Mr. President,

Since the end of the Cold War the world has entered a state of flux and instability, in which there is an increased danger of regional conflict. Often contributing to such conflict are poverty and social instability. In order to ensure global stability and prosperity, it is essential to eliminate fundamental causes of conflict through resolution of economic and social problems. The population issue has grown more complex as the international community has developed and is now a global issue that required urgent action. I believe that this issue, which is related to a whole range of economic and social issues, must be addressed by taking a comprehensive approach, one that includes the adoption of policies on basic health, education, and improvement of the status of women. Based on these ideas, Japan launched the Global Issues Initiative in February, under which it will substantially increase assistance to developing countries in the fields of population and AIDS, a clear statement of the positive stance it intends to take on these fronts.

I believe that this may prove to be one of the most important international conferences to take place in this century, and that we shall succeed in laying down principles that will guide the international community in its efforts to tackle the population issue towards the twenty-first century.

Mr. President,

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro the year before last, the close interrelation between population increase, sustainable development and global environment issues was pointed out. We are now confronted with a host of restriction on our daily lives that are due to rapid population growth,

excessive population flow into large cities, unstable movements of people across national borders, introduction of production and consumption patterns, and technologies that heavily burden the environment, and massive generation of waste natural resources and will have a serious impact on consumption-production activities. We should try to maintain the sustainable balance with respect to population growth, natural environment and consumption-production activities. Both developing and developed countries have their own responsibility. Developing countries should reduce the population growth rate, while developed countries should change the production and consumption patterns and develop and diffuse environmentally sound technology such as low-pollution automobiles and renewable energies like solar power. Moreover, the international community should promote cooperation which focus more on environmental protection and conservation of resources, in order to achieve sustainable development. It is also necessary that we make efforts to secure stable food supplies by enhancing the policies to develop sustainable and highly productive agriculture.

Last year, Japan enacted the Basic Environment Law which aims to create a society ensuring sustainable development with reduced environmental load by fostering sound economic development and the Basic Environment Plan is now being prepared to realize this law. Also, Japan announced the National Action Plan for Agenda 21 last year. In line with these initiatives, Japan is committed to establish an environmentally friendly society, and to improve its environment-related Official Development Assistance, as it pledged at UNCED.

Mr. President,

One of the major topics in this Conference is reproductive health.

My Government is of the view that reproductive health is an important concept in solving the population issue, since the concept is based upon respect for basic human -rights, such as improvement of the status of women and promotion of women's participation in the decision-making process.

Japan has been undertaking a variety of measures to enhance activities in the area of reproductive health. It provides equal educational opportunity to both genders. The health care system protects and fosters the health of mothers and children by distributing a Maternal and Child Health Handbook, providing women from the age of puberty on with the opportunity to receive counselling and guidance about pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare. These measures enable women to make their own choices and decisions based on accurate information, and along with the improvements in the attitudes and conduct of Japanese men, have brought about a decline in the rates of infant mortality and birth.

In relation to reproductive health, AIDS is another serious problem that must be addressed in confronting the issue of population. In this connection, I wish to note with pride that Japan last month hosted the Tenth International AIDS Conference.

Mr. President,

Japan recognizes the importance of the grassroots activities out in fields where governments and international organizations are not always able to deliver adequate service. It would not be going too far to say that the relationship between governments and international organizations and NGOs in these fields is a complementary one. Japan

intends to intensify its support for grassroots projects conducted by NGOs in its bilateral cooperation in the field of population, which includes enhancing dialogue with NGOs from the stage of project formulation onward. Establishing this kind of partnership with NGOs is also important internationally.

Mr. President,

Japan endorses the Draft Programme of Action, which was prepared as a result of the discussions at the preparatory meetings. I hope that the Draft Programme of Action will be adopted unanimously, so that we shall be able to cooperate with one another to deal with the population issue towards the twenty-first century. Some points of the Draft Programme of Action remain to be resolved, and I earnestly appeal to all participant States to recognize the present state of the global population and take a realistic approach at this Conference.

Mr. President,

I wish now to touch upon the efforts Japan has made to address the population problem. The Japanese people has a strong interest in this problem because of its own experience. Shortly after the Second World War, Japan underwent rapid population growth. However, it succeeded in stabilizing the growth rate of its population through its own efforts, while at the same time achieving economic growth. In recent years, Japan, like other developed countries, must deal with a rapidly aging population. In solving our population problem that developed after World War II, grassroots campaigns to diffuse knowledge about family planning conducted by NGOs, nurses, and midwives played an important role. Significant contribution was also made by improvements, which had

continued since before the war, in the education of both genders and in the primary health care available to mothers and children. These basic activities, along with the improvement in living standards, are essential in resolving the population issue. Japan, as a nation of peace, wishes to continue to contribute vigorously to the international community, mainly through activities in its areas of strength such as the economic and social fields.

To promote the success of this Conference, Japan, together with the UNFPA, hosted the Meeting of Eminent Persons on Population and Development, which culminated in the adoption of the Tokyo Declaration. It has also provided financial assistance to this Conference and the NGO forum that is being held concurrently.

Mr. President,

The population issue, an important agenda of the International community, is an area in which Japan could make full use of its capabilities and Japan regards its contribution in this field as a mission. Japan the largest donor of Official Development Assistance, announced the Global Issues Initiative on Population and AIDS in February as concrete evidence of its determination to carry out this mission. Under the Initiative, Japan will continue and enhance its international cooperation by providing Official Development Assistance in this area towards a targeted sum of US \$3 billion over the seven years from fiscal year 1994 to 2000. The United States, with whom Japan discussed these issues as a global partner, expressed the intention of providing assistance amounting to US \$3 billion during this period. By implementing the Initiative, Japan, together with the U.S., wishes to promote the world-wide effort concerning the population and AIDS issues which are part of the common agenda of all humankind. I earnestly hope

that many countries, international organizations, and NGOs respond to our appeal, and that it becomes a truly global effort.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate Japan's strong commitment to tackling the population problem and its hope for the resounding success of this Conference.

Thank you very much.

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