

JAPAN'S UN DIPLOMACY

HAND-IN-HAND WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Fumio Kishida

JAPAN was reborn after World War II as a peaceful nation bolstering internationalism. Sixty years ago, the country accomplished its long-desired goal of joining the United Nations, as its 80th Member State. For Japan, becoming a member of the United Nations meant that it was finally able to genuinely return to the international community as a nation that could make contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Since then, United Nations diplomacy has taken root as a major component of Japan's foreign policy. Japan's extensive contribution to the UN over the past 30 years, as the world's second largest financial contributor, is a testament to this fact.

I myself have personally attached great importance to the UN, and have consistently attended the General Assembly in the three years since taking office as Minister for Foreign Affairs. In par-

ticular, I was given the honor of leading the discussions on disarmament and non-proliferation—including through serving as Co-President of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, together with Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov of Kazakhstan, at the UN General Assembly last year.

Today, the international community is confronted with a variety of issues that extend across national borders, such as conflicts, terrorism, refugees, poverty, climate change, and infectious diseases. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have argued consistently that in order for Japan to realize its own ideas in the world, it is important to actively tackle these global issues and win the confidence of the world. In this sense, playing an active role in the maintenance of peace and stability of the international community clearly contributes to Japan's own national interest.

Fumio Kishida is Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.



Photo: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Fumio Kishida addressing the UN

As the UN addresses many of the issues facing the world, the Organization can be viewed as a venue for Japan to carry out its policy of making “proactive contributions to peace,” based on internationalism.

GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Last year, Japan was elected to serve for the 11th time as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, formally becoming a member in January 2016. No other UN Member State has served as many as a non-permanent member of the Security Council—a source of pride for Japan.

At the same time, this is a reflection of the solid trust that the international community places in Japan, and an indication of the fact that much is expected of us. With such a deep sense of mission, Japan is focusing on three areas from the perspective of fulfilling its responsibility for global peace and security. Each is addressed in turn.

CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN ASIA

The first point is making contributions to peace and security in Asia, as a peace-loving nation in the region.

The maintenance of peace and security in Asia is extremely important to Japan's own national security. Therefore, Japan will bear this heavy responsibility, taking into account its own national interest as a major country and a direct stakeholder in the region. In particular, North Korea's nuclear test in January and ballistic missile launch in February have seriously undermined the peace and security of Japan, its Asian surroundings, and the entire international community.

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In this regard, Japan welcomed the March 2016 adoption of the strong and comprehensive Security Council Resolution 2270, along with the independent measures taken by Japan and other countries, as an expression of strong and unified determination of the international community against the actions of North Korea. As a member of the Security Council, Japan has worked closely with the concerned countries at every level to adopt this resolution, and will continue to work closely with other UN Member States to ensure the effectiveness of this resolution. We will also strive to improve the human rights situation in North Korea, including the early resolution of the abduction issue, working through the UN and other relevant fora.

CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE AND SECURITY WORLDWIDE

Secondly, Japan's diplomatic efforts are not limited to Asia. We will take the initiative in achieving and maintaining the peace and security of the global community, which has become increasingly interconnected due to globalization. In fact, over 80 percent of consultations in the UN Security Council on regional issues pertain to the Middle East and Africa.

Japan will preside over the Security Council in July 2016. We are also holding the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in Kenya this August. In this context, and with a view to demonstrating our commitment to Africa and the world, we are considering holding an open debate on the theme of peacebuilding in Africa during our presidency of the Security Council.

The reconstruction of conflict-affected countries cannot be accomplished simply by adopting Security Council resolutions. Efforts in various areas—such as conflict prevention, peacebuilding, participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), humanitarian assistance, and development cooperation—must be

conducted in a coordinated manner so as to achieve synergy among them.

Japan is one of a handful of countries with the will and capacity to make this happen. In Africa, we have been actively contributing to this goal in different phases. These include post-conflict reconstruction and development—including by dispatching our Self-Defense Forces personnel to the PKO in South Sudan—and various activities such as election-monitoring, refugee assistance, transportation of supplies, and road and bridge construction.

These efforts have been highly appreciated by the citizens of these countries. We intend to share this experience in the Security Council's open debate in July under our presidency.

DOING OUR UTMOST FOR SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

Thirdly, we will put our utmost efforts into Security Council reform. More than 70 years have passed since the formation of the United Nations, and the global landscape has changed drastically during this period. The number of UN Member States has increased by almost four-fold—from 51 countries to 193 countries. However, the Security Council's composition remains almost entirely unchanged.

It is essential to reform the Security Council so that the international com-

munity's twenty-first-century reality is adequately reflected. The number of both non-permanent and permanent members should be increased. Countries befitting to fulfill this responsibility should become members.

I believe Japan, for one, is a country that should become a permanent member. That is why Japan has presented the G4 reform proposal together with India, Germany, and Brazil. Specifically, this proposal calls for increasing the number of permanent seats by six and non-permanent seats by four or five, thereby raising the total number of Security Council member countries to 25 or 26. With these changes, I am convinced that the Security Council will become more representative, legitimate, and effective.

As can be seen in Japan's past efforts to support peace in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, we have always prioritized dialogue and used solely peaceful methods in promoting peace. As the only country to have ever suffered the consequences of atomic bombings in an actual war, Japan has actively pursued the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda—as seen in the resolution for the elimination of nuclear weapons that Japan has been annually submitting at the UN.

Japan has a solid track record of contributing to peace, not only in

its own region but also in other regions—including Africa and the Middle East—as well as globally. We are a country that adheres to the principle of “proactive contribution to peace.” I am confident that making us a permanent member of the Security Council would offer a significant boost to global peace and security.

I launched the United Nations Security Council Strategy Headquarters within the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in January, which I have been personally chairing. Based on the discussions reached at our Strategy Headquarters, Japan has already engaged in a variety of diplomatic efforts, such as dispatching State Ministers and Parliamentary Vice-Ministers for Foreign Affairs to various regions to have bilateral engagements with countries concerned.

In order to make progress in Security Council reform, it is crucially important to work with other proponents of reform. These include African countries, which account for more than a quarter of UN membership. At our Strategy Headquarters, we are currently reviewing future actions based on such an understanding. While Security Council reform is a very challenging issue, text-based Intergovernmental

Negotiations towards concrete outcomes of reform began in New York in February 2016, under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. Japan intends to take a leading role in these negotiations to achieve real progress in bringing about reform.

HAND-IN-HAND WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

In discussing the future of Japan's diplomacy at the UN, I particularly want to stress our desire to walk “hand-in-hand with developing countries.” This is, in fact, a keyword that forms the foundation of our policy.

Global peace and security is closely linked to development and human rights, which are key issues for the UN. The majority of UN Member States are developing countries, and poverty and human rights abuses are the root causes of conflict in many cases.

Although the global population of people living in poverty has been halved, there are still more than 800 million people suffering under impoverished conditions: over 60 million people are displaced from their homes, and 125 million people—a figure that is roughly equivalent to Japan's population—require humanitarian assistance.

I intend to continue to place emphasis on “human security” and show to the world a Japan that walks “hand-in-hand with developing countries.”

Japan has always attached importance to the welfare of the individual person, as well as the need for people to be able to live with dignity and freedom from fear and want. This is why Japan has proposed the concept of “human security,” which aims to promote nation- and society-building through protecting and empowering the individual person.

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THE 2030 AGENDA

Last year, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that reflects Japan's concept of “human security.” This is the first year of its implementation. The guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda is “leaving no one behind.” It is necessary for all UN Member States, developed or developing, to implement this agenda and build partnerships with all stakeholders, including international organizations, NGOs, and private-sector companies.

For example, when I visited Ethiopia, I witnessed how a working method that had been originally developed through operational experience in Japan's manufacturing sector was being applied to enhance the country's productivity. The method was dubbed the

kaizen method by locals, a Japanese term for “improvement.”

The UN will host the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 to discuss the future of humanitarian action. This will feature the participation of various stakeholders, including Member State governments, NGOs, think-tanks, and private companies. Japan will actively contribute to the success of this meeting, for this is the first major touchstone of global efforts towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

G7 ISE-SHIMA SUMMIT

Development is also a major pillar of the discussions to be held at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in May. Japan will address this issue in cooperation with other G7 member countries by focusing on issue areas in which Japan has been playing a leading role. These include empowerment of women, quality infrastructure, and global health.

Japan has always provided assistance by listening to the voices of recipient countries, tailoring to their needs and respecting their ownership. We “walk hand-in-hand with developing countries.” This can be said to be the essence of Japan's development cooperation.

TICAD, co-organized by Japan, together with the UN, the African Union, and others, is a good example of this.

TICAD has been convened five times in Japan thus far, and will be held in Africa for the first time in August 2016. Japan will promote the UN agenda in Africa through the TICAD process by listening to the voices of African countries, and walking hand-in-hand with them. Since becoming Foreign Minister, I have myself participated in the TICAD Ministerial Meetings held in Ethiopia and Cameroon, and served as their co-chair in those meetings. It is my intention to further strengthen our relations with African nations.

Such is the way in which Japan will pursue its path of “walking hand-in-hand with developing countries” in its diplomacy.

NATIONAL & COMMON INTERESTS

In this landmark year of its 60th anniversary as a UN Member State, Japan is actively striving to realize both its own national interest and the common interest of the international community by maximizing the utilization of the United Nations as a forum. In doing so, we will continue to appeal to the world that Japan is a country that “walks hand-in-hand with developing countries.”

As Foreign Minister of Japan, I intend to make good use of valuable opportunities offered by the United Nations, the G7 Summit, and TICAD VI, and also work across these fora to consistently address the many issues with which the international community is faced. ●

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