



Prime Minister Kishida delivering an address at the United Nations General Assembly.

A WORLD CARING FOR HUMAN DIGNITY: PM KISHIDA'S SPEECH AT THE UNGA

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On September 19, 2023, Prime Minister Kishida delivered an address at the General Debate of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly. PM Kishida called for the realization of a world filled with cooperation rather than division and confrontation, by shedding a new light on “human dignity” and advancing “human-centered international cooperation,” and for concrete action to strengthen the functions of the UN, including reform of the Security Council.

1. Introduction:

Mr. President, Excellencies,

Now we have gathered in New York once again. The SDGs are at their midpoint, facing mounting obstacles. To our dismay, the aggression against Ukraine has yet to cease.

This year, as the world stands at a historical inflection point, Japan serves as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and the Presidency of the G7. Through those capacities, I have heard the desperate desire for peace and the pleas of vulnerable people seeking help. We should respond to these voices and work towards a world filled with cooperation, not division and confrontation.

This is my message to all the leaders of the Member States.

In Our Common Agenda, Secretary-General Guterres called for international solidarity. Let us renew our

commitment to a strong and effective multilateralism, with the UN at its core.

2. Defending human dignity through international cooperation:

Mr. President,

The world faces complex and interrelated issues ranging from climate change, infectious diseases to challenges to the rule of law. Now, at a time when international cooperation is in want more than ever, we cannot overcome these difficulties if the international community remains divided over ideologies or values.

That is why I believe we should go back to the very basic foundation of treating human life and dignity with paramount importance. We should aim for “A World Caring for Human Dignity,” where vulnerable people can live safely and securely.

At a time when the international community is facing

multiple crises and increasingly being divided, we need a common language which resonates to all of us. By shedding a new light on “human dignity,” I believe the international community can overcome differences in regimes or values, and steadily advance “human-centered international cooperation”.

Japan has led human-centered international cooperation, based on the concept of human security. With this approach, we need to accelerate the efforts among the international community to achieve the SDGs.

The dignity of the individual must not be neglected as states and the international community tackle global challenges. To overcome inequalities and achieve the SDGs, “Quality Growth” and “Sustainable Growth” are essential. The key is to “invest in people”, which is my political credo.

Gender perspective is also important for ‘Quality Growth’. Japan aims to reduce inequalities and overcome social divisions by promoting women’s participation.

Japan will promote transparent and fair development finance in accordance with international rules to achieve sustainable growth in developing countries. Private finance will also be tapped to fill the gap of development finance. Japan will work with other countries to seek economies that protect human dignity while attracting investment dynamism.

3. Cooperation Pursued:

Mr. President,

In order to address unprecedented crises and challenges, and to protect and strengthen ‘human dignity’, let us start step by step from where we can.

The first is cooperation towards the realization of a peaceful and stable international community where human dignity is respected. Hailing from Hiroshima, which was devastated by atomic bombing, I have made nuclear disarmament my lifelong mission. Towards achieving a world without nuclear weapons, we will continue to bolster realistic and practical efforts, while upholding and strengthening the NPT by implementing measures under the “Hiroshima Action Plan.”

I call on political leaders of nuclear-weapon States and other countries around the globe to step up their engagement on nuclear disarmament so that those from all walks of life are exposed to its importance and take concrete action, not despite of, but because of the

challenging security environment.

With a view to working towards a world without nuclear weapons, which we have been striving for together with the Hibakushas, we must crystalize the nuclear disarmament trend, which has been successfully “mainstreamed” thanks to the efforts of our predecessors.

As we speak, we are faced with the threat of the reversal of the downward trend of the global number of nuclear weapons. The significance of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices (FMCT), which was avowed here in the General Assembly 30 years ago, has not diminished by any measure. That is why I just co-hosted a High-Level Event on FMCT with the Philippines and Australia to refocus political attention towards the FMCT on the 30th year of its initial proposal.

Having nuclear-weapon States engage in concrete nuclear disarmament measures is key. Japan, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, will work with the UN and relevant States to promote dialogue between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

To set in stone the trend of “mainstreaming” nuclear disarmament, it is paramount to transcend purely government efforts and engage in multi-layered efforts. To overcome the divisive debate among academia and government over whether we should be choosing deterrence or disarmament, Japan will contribute 3 billion yen to newly establish “Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons” at overseas research institutes and think tanks.

We will also continue to build a global network of young people for nuclear abolition, making use of the Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons, which I established last year in cooperation with the United Nations.

During the G7 Hiroshima Summit Meeting, the leaders of the invited countries and the heads of international organizations shared the pledge for peace at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The G7 leaders issued the “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament,” the group’s first-ever document focusing on nuclear disarmament.



It is also essential to ensure nuclear safety and the security of nuclear materials and facilities, including in situations of conflict.

We also need to defend the dignity of people jeopardized by armed conflicts.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine continues. A food crisis must not be perpetuated. Supporting vulnerable people in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere is essential.

We need to protect the safety of women and children who are the most vulnerable in conflict situations, to strengthen border controls and measures against trafficking in persons as well as to provide international support to retrieve abducted children. Women, Peace and Security (WPS) places women as crucial and active players in relevant policies for peace and security, and Japan will continue to promote this agenda.

The second is how to take a balance between the progress of digitalization and human dignity.

Digitalization is bringing benefits to everybody; however, there are risks of violating privacy and human rights. We need a digital ecosystem and international rules that are compatible with human dignity. That is why at the G7 Hiroshima Summit we launched the Hiroshima AI Process on Generative AI, toward trustworthy AI.

Japan will also strengthen its support for digitalization in developing countries in the manner of ensuring cybersecurity.

Third, Japan will work to mitigate the potential impact on people which may arise before net-zero is achieved.

Asian countries are the key to globally achieving net-zero. Under the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) initiative, Japan will promote effective cooperation, taking into account various needs.



Several MOUs on the production and utilization of ammonia were signed at the AZEC Public-Private Investment Forum held in March 2023. The photo shows the Hekinan Thermal Power Station in Aichi, where a demonstration project to generate electricity by co-firing ammonia and coal is underway. JERA CO., INC.

Japan will further support disaster risk reduction for countries vulnerable to climate change, including island states, aiding efforts towards resilient economies and societies against sea level rise and natural disasters associated with extreme weather events.

The ocean is a new frontier with abundant potential and it is essential to take comprehensive measures, including making use of blue carbon to tackle climate change.

The perspective of international law is also important. Japan supports the preservation of existing baselines under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, even after the future regression of coastline due to sea level rise.

As the G7 Presidency, we have set a framework for cooperation on biodiversity conservation and a target of reducing additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040. Japan will continue to contribute in the field of environmental protection.

Fourth, we must prepare for the next infectious disease outbreak.

We must be ready for the next infectious disease, learning from the lessons through our fight against COVID-19.

As the G7, both the public and private sectors have pledged more than USD 48 billion to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) and to strengthen prevention, preparedness and response (PPR) to health crises. Japan will contribute USD 7.5 billion for the period of 2022-25.

Together with the mobilization of domestic financial resources, Japan supports mobilizing financial resources in the private sector through the promotion of impact investments. Japan will continue to work with developing countries, including emerging economies, to ensure equitable access to medical countermeasures for health emergencies (MCMs), based on the G20 outcomes.

4. The Rule of Law

Mr. President,

At a time when the world is at a historical inflection point, we must reflect on how we started here.

Inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations is the firm determination of our predecessors, after the experience of two world wars, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to protect human dignity.

The principles of the UN Charter, such as sovereign equality, respect for territorial integrity and the

prohibition of the use of force, are fundamental principles of international law for people to live in peace and provide the basis of the 'rule of law'.

International law is there for the benefit of weaker states. Together, under the 'rule of law', Japan would like to protect the right of vulnerable nations and peoples to live in peace, in order to safeguard and strengthen 'human dignity'.

However, even to this day, Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, is infringing upon international law and the 'rule of law'. Unilateral changes to the status quo by force or coercion are unacceptable anywhere in the world. The situation, which the General Assembly has repeatedly condemned as a violation of the UN Charter and human rights, must be rectified as soon as possible and the nuclear threat must be ended.

In March of this year, I announced a new plan for FOIP, a free and open Indo-Pacific. Based on the principles of freedom, the rule of law, inclusiveness, openness and diversity, Japan will work with countries that share a vision of a world where diverse nations coexist and prosper together.

Japan will further extend our support for peacekeepers. Japan will strengthen the scope and quality of the UN Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP), with an additional contribution of around USD 9 million to support the capacity building of personnel deployed in AU Peace Support Operations.

Japan's policy on North Korea remains unchanged. Japan seeks to normalize its relationship with North Korea, in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, through comprehensively resolving the outstanding issues of concern such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, as well as settlement of our unfortunate past.

From the perspective of opening up a new era together, I would like to convey my determination to meet with President Kim Jong-un face to face at any time without any conditions, and would like to hold high-level talks under my direct supervision to realize a summit meeting at an early time.

5. Towards a stronger United Nations:

Mr. President,

The United Nations should be a place of listening to the voices of people facing difficulties, empowering them,



On September 20, PM Kishida received the Global Goalkeepers Award 2023, sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, for Japan's health-focused leadership at the G7 Hiroshima Summit and years of immense contribution to global health, among other reasons.

and overcoming such difficulties through cooperation; it should not be a place of confrontation and division.

This year, we have agreed on concrete measures to strengthen the structures that support the President of the General Assembly. This is a steady step towards a "UN for cooperation".

We commend the Secretary-General's leadership with his vision for multilateralism.

Initiatives to limit the use of the veto, which exacerbates division and confrontation in the UN, will strengthen and restore confidence in the Security Council. Japan will also continue its efforts to increase the transparency of discussions in the Security Council, including by improving access to deliberations in the Security Council for member states other than the permanent members. To this end, Japan will contribute to the clarification of the rules of the Security Council.

The world is changing dramatically. We need a Security Council that reflects the world today. Japan supports increased representation of Africa and the need to expand both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council. Looking ahead to next year's Summit of the Future and the subsequent 80th anniversary of the UN, now is the opportunity to move to concrete action.

6. Conclusion:

Mr. President,

International cooperation that protects and strengthens 'human dignity' will be the driving force that brings the world back towards the same goal.

I am looking forward to deepening this discussion at next year's Summit of the Future with future generations in mind. And as we envision the post-2030 Agenda in the future, I believe human dignity should be placed as the core principle that illuminates the future of the international community.

Let us join our forces to strengthen human dignity and create a 'United Nations for cooperation'.

Thank you for your attention. ●