



**ADDRESS BY
PRIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE,
AT THE SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS
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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen,
First, join me please in congratulating Ambassador John ASHE on assuming the Presidency.

Mr. President,

First, I would like to state a new pledge about the situation in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons has aroused profound shock and anger in the people in Japan, including myself. Chemical weapons must never be used again.

I hereby declare that Japan will provide thorough support and the greatest possible cooperation towards the international community's efforts to dispose of Syria's chemical weapons.

We feel righteous indignation about innocent civilians continuing to be victims. Japan regards the cessation of violence, initiation of political dialogue and improvement of appalling humanitarian conditions as issues of urgency. Right now, at this very moment, the number of refugees is soaring. To them, Japan will give still greater assistance.

We will act in cooperation with the international community to extend a helping hand to internally displaced persons and refugees fleeing across national borders. I take pride in the fact that Japan's NGOs and volunteer organizations are working around the clock to help them.

Japan will continue to provide assistance also to areas under the control of the opposition groups, where it is difficult for assistance from the international community to reach. We are working to undertake the training of staff working at medical centers. We will also deliver portable X-ray devices

and other medical equipment to those areas.

With the despair of the refugees now escalating as they head for a harsh winter, I would like to announce that the Government of Japan will newly provide additional humanitarian assistance to Syria and surrounding countries of approximately US\$60 million and implement it right away.

We are determined to conduct such assistance in parallel with the process of political dialogue, notably the Geneva II Conference, and to move forward in cooperation with the international community.

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Our nation Japan and its capital Tokyo have been granted the honor of hosting the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, seven years from now.

To reciprocate this good fortune we have come to enjoy, my obligation first of all is to rebuild the Japanese economy to be vibrant, and then to make Japan a dependable “force” that works for good in the world.

I pledge here that I will make Japan a force for peace and stability, just as it has been until now -- or rather, to a degree even greater than it has been thus far, given the increasingly tragic state suffusing the globe.

Japan will newly bear the flag of “Proactive Contribution to Peace,” anchoring on the undeniable records and solid appraisal of our country, which has endeavored to bring peace and prosperity to the world, emphasizing cooperation with the international community.

The world’s power balance has been changing rapidly and technological innovations are now removing all borders from both new opportunities and new types of threats. It is now impossible for any one country, no matter which it may be, to safeguard its own peace and security acting entirely by itself.

This is why Japan is working to garner trust from the world as a creator of added value and a net contributor for regional and world peace and stability.

Given these circumstances, the role of the United Nations will become even more important. Until now Japan has continually promoted the concept of “human security.” The implications of this concept will surely expand as well.

Through the accumulation of discussions over 9 years since the submission of a report by the Commission on Human Security, the resolution on a common understanding on the notion of human security was adopted, here at the General Assembly, September last year. Guided by the wisdom of the forerunners, Japan is determined to further spread the concept and build actual practices.

I will enable Japan, as a Proactive Contributor to Peace, to be even more actively engaged in UN collective security measures, including peacekeeping operations. I believe Japan must continuously cultivate our human resources appropriate to the UN activities.

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

For Japan, whose national interests are firmly connected to the stability of seas that are open, changes to the maritime order through the use of force or coercion cannot be condoned under any circumstances.

There are great expectations for Japan to rigorously preserve public spaces ranging from outer space and cyberspace to the skies and the seas as global commons governed by rules and laws.

Japan, as a county that understands the horror and devastation wrought by atomic bombs, will utterly devote itself to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

North Korea’s nuclear and missile development cannot be condoned. Japan also maintains serious concerns with regard to other weapons of mass destruction that North Korea is likely to possess.

Pyongyang should listen to the unified voice of the international community and, rectify its own actions, by taking a tangible step.

We demand that North Korea return every Japanese national it abducted, without exception. While in office, I am determined to resolve this issue completely, and the normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea remains unthinkable without the resolution of this issue.

As for Iran's nuclear issue, Japan hopes that Iran's new administration will take concrete actions forward, and we are ready to continue to play a role in order to resolve the issue.

In the Middle East region, a cornerstone for world peace and prosperity, Japan will continue the unique contributions it has been making towards the Middle East peace process thus far.

Japan will also continue to extend cooperation to the countries of Africa, which are certain to become a growth engine this century. Firmly rooted in our own experiences, this cooperation takes the fostering of human resources as its main emphasis and seeks to achieve sustainable growth while cultivating ownership by Africa itself.

This last June, my government invited African heads of state and government and representatives of international organizations to Japan to convene "TICAD V," the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

On this occasion, I was deeply struck. The representatives of African nations repeatedly expressed great eagerness to welcome private sector investment.

Investment flow to Africa now exceeds the flow of assistance. I also heard time and again from the African leaders that assistance should be utilized strategically, as a catalyst inviting investment.

This is the evolution of discussions the twenty-year long TICAD process has witnessed and given rise to. TICAD V became a forum where we celebrated the path Africa has walked down and together reconfirmed that Japan has been an enduring partner weaving dreams side by side with Africa.

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I hold the firm conviction that the future course of Japan's diplomacy will begin here, by sparing no pains to get actively engaged in historic challenges facing today's world, with our regained strength and capacity.

I consider "sparing no pains" to be nothing less than the basso continuo notes that set the basic tone for Japan's actions, be they in diplomacy or any other field.

As a country with such intentions, strengths, and achievements, we consider it extremely regrettable that the Security Council's structure is still frozen in a state that reflects the realities of some 70 years ago.

The Security Council must be reformed without delay. Japan's aspiration to become a permanent member of the Council has not changed in the slightest.

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Everything will begin with refortifying Japan's true abilities and its economy once more. The growth of Japan will benefit the world. Japan's decline would be a loss for people everywhere.

So how, then, does Japan aim to realize this growth? What will serve as both a factor for and outcome of growth will be to mobilize the power of women, a point almost self-evident at this gathering.

There is a theory called "womenomics," which asserts that the more the advance of women in society is promoted, the higher the growth rate becomes.

Creating an environment in which women find it comfortable to work and enhancing opportunities for women to work and to be active in society is no longer a matter of choice for Japan. It is instead a

matter of the greatest urgency.

Declaring my intention to create “a society in which women shine,” I have been working to change Japan’s domestic structures. However, this is not confined merely to domestic matters. Now I would like to address how this is also a thread guiding Japan’s diplomacy.

To begin, I would like to state four contributions through which Japan aspires to remain a leading member within the international community.

First, Japan respects the activities of UN Women and intends to become one of its leading contributors and thus an exemplary country in the area. Japan will also work closely with relevant international organizations.

Second, as other like-minded countries have already done, Japan also intends to develop a national action plan regarding women, peace, and security, in cooperation with people working at the grass-roots level.

Third, Japan will cooperate closely with not only UN Women but also the International Criminal Court and the office of Her Excellency Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

It is a matter of outrage that there continues to be sexual violence against women during times of armed conflict even now, in the 21st century. Japan will do everything possible to prevent such crimes against women and to support both materially and psychologically those people who unfortunately become victims of such acts.

Fourth, Japan will submit once more at the next session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women a draft resolution that gives careful consideration to women in natural disasters, as they are likely to be vulnerable. Japan, which itself experienced a major natural disaster two years ago, wishes to gain support for this draft resolution, which embodies our torrent of emotions.

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would now like to make use of the examples of three individuals to clarify Japan's development concept aimed at bringing about a "society in which women shine" and also shed light on some issues that must be tackled.

I will first introduce the examples of one Japanese and one Bangladeshi woman and then an Afghan woman as the third example.

Ms. Tokiko Sato was an expert of JICA, the Japan International Cooperation Agency. She was responsible for improving maternal, newborn and child health for over 15 years in a remote village in Jordan.

Undaunted by the suspicious looks she first saw among the villagers, Ms. Sato would speak with anyone, anywhere.

Devoted to her ideas, including making use of public entertainment to persuade the villagers, Ms. Sato finally found herself accepted by the village community.

"The one who decides the number of children is the husband, not the wife." Ms. Sato's tenacity gradually transformed this traditional idea into a mindset that values the health of women.

As you are aware, my country Japan played a leading role when the Global Fund aimed at fighting HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis at the global level was established. Japan also intends to continue to make an appropriate contribution at the upcoming Fourth Replenishment, which seeks to secure additional financing for the Fund.

However, as for the "post-2015 development agenda," it would be most appropriate to broaden the focus to the one overarching those individual diseases.

Japan regards approaches that address individuals holistically as better able to meet broader health needs. This is why Japan decided to promote universal health coverage, or "UHC," on the occasion of the TICAD V.

To address health issues in the African region, we have readied US\$500 million and are at present concentrating on setting up training for 120,000 health and medical services providers.

Medical care for all. There can be no doubt that the people who give the human touch to the three letters “UHC” are, in concrete terms, people like Ms. Sato, who unsparingly enter into local communities.

The second person I would like to introduce is Ms. Nilufa Yeasmin, a young Bangladeshi woman who is the mother of two. Her professional title is “Poly-Glu Lady.”

“Poly-Glu,” is a made-in-Japan water depurative derived from a food which can be found in Japan in great abundance. You simply add it to turbid water. Poly-Glu acts as an adsorbent, adhering to excess substances in the water, and then falls to the bottom as a precipitate, leaving the water clear.

It is necessary to teach people how to use it correctly at the outset, and Ms. Nilufa and other “Poly-Glu Ladies” serve as both salespersons and instructors.

As you can see, as what is called a “base of the pyramid” or “BOP” business, this endeavor is characterized by the expectations placed on the power of women. By combining her income with her husband’s, Ms. Nilufa has become able to send her children to higher education.

Poverty caused Ms. Nilufa to give up on the dream she had cherished as a little girl to become a doctor someday. But I understand that now she proudly states she has become “a doctor of clean water.” Can we not say that Ms. Nilufa has acquired self-esteem, the most precious asset of all?

My government wishes to bring forth as many Ms. Nilufas as possible. It is by the way a very small Japanese company that makes Poly-Glu. We will work to enhance the assistance to such companies and organizations to make their ideas to bear fruit.

Mr. President,

And to everyone here today,

Finally, there is one more woman I would like to introduce. But, this Afghan lady is no longer with us. Her name is Ms. Islam Bibi, and on July 4th of this year, she was gunned down and assassinated. 37 years old, survived by three children.

A proud female police officer with the Afghan police -- that was Ms. Bibi. She came to shoulder heavy responsibilities through her nine years of service. She guarded polling stations in order to monitor elections. She was also a trainer to young female officers coming after her.

We have much work to be done. Yet we must proceed undaunted.

Through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, Japan has been one of the countries that has always taken great pains to improve the capacity of Afghan police force and also cultivate female police officers, whose number will be finally reaching 1,800, still far from enough. I have renewed my determination that we must continue to provide support so that we should have no more Ms. Bibi.

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

What I wanted to emphasize through the real-life example of Ms. Nilufa in Bangladesh is the necessity of promoting women's participation in society and of the empowerment of women.

The Government of Japan has positioned this as our foremost policy area and we will continue our highly inventive efforts, including launching start-up businesses in Africa.

What Ms. Tokiko Sato, the Japanese aid specialist, has appealed through her actions is the importance of maternal, newborn and child health. This is an area where attainment of the MDGs has been conspicuously slow.

My administration will, as its second area of policy priority, engage in greater efforts in the field of health and medical care for women.

Finally, what I hoped to convey through the tragic example of Islam Bibi is the importance of women's participation and protection in the areas of peace and security.

Japan intends to make efforts towards measures that will ensure the participation of women at all stages, including the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as peace-building, and that will also safeguard the rights and the physical well-being of women who are exposed to danger in times of conflict.

I would like to state here that in establishing these three pillars, the Government of Japan will implement ODA in excess of US\$3 billion over the next three years, targeting these pillars.

Mr. President,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In closing, if we were to follow the wisdom of "womenomics" mentioned earlier, our development concept under which we focus on cultivating the power of women would engender more peace and well-being in the world.

I wish to bring about "a society where women shine," both within Japan and also in regions in conflict and countries suffering from poverty. I do not consider the outlook to be optimistic. However, I know one thing: that in my country, Japan, there are a considerable number of people who are working unsparingly towards that end.

They are the people who are making every effort to ready themselves to be able to work with you, together.

Thank you very much.