

Speech of the Prime Minister

Address by Prime Minister Abe at the Seventy-Fourth Session
of the United Nations General Assembly,
September 24, 2019

Full text: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201909/_00002.html



Mr. Chairman, under your chairmanship, the United Nations will commemorate the 75th anniversary of its founding.

In Japan, a new Emperor has acceded to the imperial throne and the ceremony for His Majesty to declare this fact to both domestic and international audiences is near at hand, on October 22. Heads of state and government and top leaders from approximately 200 nations and international organizations will attend, and there is no greater joy than that of the well-wishing extended to us upon the start of the Emperor's new era. The Japanese people regard this as an unparalleled opportunity and they will once again turn their thoughts to the role Japan takes on towards the world.

In my country, the period in which a long-standing economic slump caused people to become inward-looking is now a thing of the past. Dates that raise awareness of our strong bonds with the world and turn people's eyes

outward and towards the future -- the Rugby World Cup, of which fierce contests continue to be played out at this very moment; the Olympic and Paralympic Games that will be held next year in Tokyo; and World Expo 2025 that Osaka and the surrounding region will host -- are written large on Japan's calendar as landmark events.

Created this way is a new generation of Japanese, one that is reliable, and willing to carry forth the UN ideals, you may want to say.

I would like you also to keep in mind the meeting that will come around to Japan next April. The 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, commonly known as "the UN Crime Congress" will convene in Kyoto. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime holds the meeting once every five years. Fifty years will have passed since 1970, when Japan hosted this same meeting as the first UN Crime Congress held outside Europe. At its prime for cherry blossoms, Kyoto, I know, will be welcoming visiting experts in law enforcement.

What I have just said leads one to see what value Japan seeks in its engagement with the world, in that it values education, for the country's primary objective is to foster the power of individuals, one by one. To continue to do so has been and still is the very essence of what Japan can contribute to the rest of the world.

Now, it was this past March that Malala Yousafzai was in Tokyo. She looked me right in the eye and said, "As many as 100 million girls lack the skills they need to have a good command of modern technology, for they don't undergo a minimum education of 12 years." She says that if all girls completed secondary school, they could add up to 30 trillion US dollars to the global economy. I invited Malala to Japan before the G20 Osaka Summit I would chair in June, hoping to highlight policies that empower women and girls.

If women were able to demonstrate the potential they hold, the world would sparkle that much more. But that

is an obvious truth, isn't it? In Japan, where the labour participation rate for women has seen a marked rise, we are witnessing that self-evident fact on a daily basis.

I am delighted that we were able to capture what Malala advocates for in both the G20 Leaders' Declaration and another outcome document in the annex. We pledged to "promote inclusive quality education for all girls and women." Japan wishes to run at all times at the very front of the pack with respect to these efforts.

Now, let me tell you of an example from Tanzania.

When I was turning 30 years of age, I remember a Tanzanian marathon runner, Juma Ikangaa, was fiercely competitive every time he ran the Tokyo Marathon. After returning home in Tanzania, Mr. Ikangaa, who considers Japan to be his second home, became a goodwill public relations ambassador at the local office of JICA, the Government of Japan's agency for international cooperation. Sent from Japan to be stationed there, was a woman full of energy, named ITO Miwa. The two of them combined forces, with Ms. Ito getting sponsorship funding from 13 Japanese companies and Mr. Ikangaa searching for girls who could be future Olympians. Their efforts ultimately culminated in Tanzania's first-ever women's track meet. That was in November 2017. One thousand girls living nearby attending elementary and junior high schools were invited as spectators. But they were not there simply to watch the event. Educational materials on avoiding teenage pregnancy were also handed out. Having the girls read these materials was another purpose.

In Arusha, Tanzania, an area the Masai and others call home, where the high peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro can be seen in the east-northeast, an all-girls' junior high school named "Sakura" opened in January 2016 through the efforts of a group of Japanese people. The school is entirely residential in order to provide its students with absolute security and safety. The number of students has grown from 24 at the beginning to 162 this past spring. The Japanese government supports the school financially, but it is run by NGOs, both Japanese and local. They teach the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics -- and how to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

In Cambodia as well, I know there is a Japanese entrepreneur who has been working to improve education there, a project that is entirely his own brainchild. His initiative sends Japanese teachers, seasoned veterans in math and science, to Cambodia. There, they coach young men and women who are on track to become teachers.

The initiative is called "Teachers Without Borders." I find it very much heart-warming to see people in Japan's private sector devoting themselves voluntarily in this way to the education of young people, especially girls, in Tanzania and in Cambodia, purely out of intrinsic motivation, without seeking anyone's recognition as such.

Over the next three years, the Government of Japan will provide enriched education to a minimum of nine million children and young people in Sub-Saharan African and Asian nations. We plan to expand "e-learning" for primary school children in Sri Lanka as well as Internet-based mathematics and science education in Rwanda. But I must say that these endeavours were largely inspired by the efforts underway by people in the private sector.

Mr. Chairman, this is my seventh consecutive year to deliver a statement in the general debate at the General Assembly. Over this time, I have consistently emphasized the importance of empowering women and girls and the value of making health care universally available.

This year too, I have addressed both of these issues at separate meetings on the side-lines. At the same time, I wish to emphasize that the essence of Japan's international engagement can be found in the fact that we earnestly value education, as seen in the contributions of Japan that I just mentioned. Japan aspires to be an "FP," shall I say, or a "foster power," one that fosters human capacity.

My final point, is that Japan will make use of multilateral frameworks and globalism, to reduce disparities, inter alia.

On the heels of the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) and the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement, the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) is now poised to reach agreement, with Japan's contribution serving as a propelling force.

The world will become more connected, leading more people to escape from poverty. In recent years I chaired the G7 and G20 summits as well as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or "TICAD," three times, demonstrating repeatedly that multilateral frameworks do indeed have that role as a leveller. As a consequence, the terms "quality infrastructure" and "a free and open Indo-Pacific" have entered the lexicon of the international community, I would like you to note.

Thank you very much. *