

Press Release

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Statement by H.E. Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka
Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations
at the Meeting of the Security Council on
"Women and Peace and Security"

24 October 2000

Mr. President,

Having experienced frequent outbreaks of regional conflict since the end of the Cold War, the international community has come to realize the need to address major issues relating to conflicts, such as the protection of the innocent civilians in armed conflict, the prevention and settlement of conflicts, from wider perspective and in a more comprehensive manner, in order to put an end to the scourge of armed conflicts in the 21st century. In this context, for example, significant progress has been made in the field of the protection of children during and after conflicts, through the efforts to put an emphasis on this issue.

From this point of view, Japan shares the view that a gender perspective must be taken into account as well, and concrete issues such as the protection of women in armed conflicts and their participation in peace-making, peace-keeping, and peace-building should be further discussed if progress is to be made in this area.

I therefore should like to pay high tribute to you, Mr. President, for your thoughtful initiative in convening this open debate and my delegation also commends the efforts of Ms. Angela King, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM in this regard.

Mr. President,

This year, at the Beijing +5 conference, the international community reaffirmed its strong commitment to mainstreaming a gender perspective in every area of human endeavor. Among the efforts being made to follow up this commitment, this discussion in the Security Council is particularly timely and meaningful as the issue of conflict is the most critical issue that we have to tackle in the 21st century.

In this context, we welcome the efforts already done in this area such as the participation of women in the Burundi peace-making process and the adoption of the Namibia Plan of Action on the occasion of the seminar on "Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations." I believe that, with these precious inputs, our discussion today will lead us to an exploration of further concrete actions in this area.

Mr. President,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the views of Japan on some important points relating to this issue.

First, there is a clear need to strengthen efforts to provide protection to women and girls in conflict situations. In view of the horrified reality that we are facing where innocent civilians continue to be victimized in armed conflicts, the protection of women and girls should be our paramount concern. I would like to appeal to all the parties to conflicts and the international community as a whole to grasp a clear picture of the situation as clearly as possible, face up to it, and together take the measures necessary to protect women and girls, and introduce the viewpoint of women victims in the peace-making process.

The second point I would like to emphasize is the importance of the role of women, especially in peace-building. Because women are such a vital part of every grass-roots community, it is essential that they be involved if the vicious circle of poverty and conflict is to be broken and if rehabilitation is to be successful. Japan has long attached special importance to the role of women in addressing poverty, which is a root cause of conflict, and for that reason has promoted the initiative "Women in Development" that it launched at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

In view of the need to enhance the participation of women in the rehabilitation process, which contributes importantly to peace-building, Japan actively supported the convening of the Symposium "Empowerment of Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction" held by UNDP in Tokyo last July. Further, Japan has been implementing many projects in areas such as education, health, and the economic independence of women in countries in Asia and Africa such as Cambodia and Ethiopia, all of which have been severely damaged as the result of conflict and it intends to continue such efforts.

My third point is the importance of a comprehensive approach to this issue, and the concomitant need for cooperation among international organizations, governments, NGOs and other partners of the international community. Today's debate should be a turning point for us. We should move from an advocacy phase to one of concrete action. Japan is of the view that relevant international organizations such as UNIFEM that have gender expertise should strengthen their efforts to study specific measures to realize the gender-mainstreaming in conflict-prevention, peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building, and to implement programmes to assist women in the field.

Mr. President,

Japan believes deeply that we should put an emphasis on human-centered approach which gives priority to respect of life and dignity of every human being, in order to achieve in the coming century an international society characterized by peace and stability.

We are convinced that greater participation by women in the process of peace-making, peace-keeping, peace-building would greatly contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability, as women are the ones who have been experiencing the degradation of life and dignity in a serious manner in armed conflict.

I would like to conclude my statement by reaffirming Japan's readiness to take active part in the efforts of the international community to address this issue guided by our debate here today.

Thank you.