Statement of Japan
Midterm Review of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, Agenda item 2
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Mister Chair,

To begin I would like to express my warmest congratulations to you on your election as Chair.

Let me briefly summary the Country Report of Japan we have submitted you earlier.

Japanese population is ageing and declining. Although the straight forward decline of total fertility rate was halted in 2005, the increase was slow and recently show a stagnation since 2015. On the other hand, the life expectancy is increasing slowly but steadily. These trends make the situation that the proportion of elderly aged 65 years and over is now exceeded 28%, the highest of the world, and the total population decline during the year of 2017 amounted to 200 thousands.

Low fertility and consequent population ageing is one of the top concerns of the country and policies to mitigate the low fertility are abundant ranging from the child allowance, childbirth and childcare leave, kindergarten provision as well as support for the marriage and the relationship with the grandparents. The contraceptive practices of the never-married persons aged 18 to 34 are increasing both for men and women and decreasing for married couple. Due to the delaying marriage and consequent difficulties in pregnancy, the proportion of birth using ART (Assisted Reproductive Technology) among the total births is increasing rapidly from 2.70% in 2010 to 4.93% in 2015. To ease the economic burden of couples who suffer from infertility, partial grant for the treatment is provided through the governmental program and the number of granted cases rose from 96,458 in 2010 to 148,659 in 2013.

As for the health and mortality, the life expectancy in Japan was 87.26 for women, 81.09 for men in 2017 and it was among the longest in the world. However, the governmental goal is not only to extend the life expectancy but to extend the healthy life expectancy. So far
up to 2016, the healthy life expectancy is increasing and the unhealthy years are shrinking. I would also like to add that both maternal mortality ratio and under-5 mortality rate are decreasing from 2010 to 2016.

As for the income protection of the elderly, the proportion of older persons aged 65 years and over who are receiving public pension was 94.5% for men and 95.4% for women in 2016. This proportion decreased for both men and women since 2010 due to the increasing older persons still working and hence not yet receiving pension and other reasons. The public long-term care insurance started in 2000 and the persons who are certified to receive long-term care increased from 2.18 million in 2000 to 6.33 million in 2017. The long-term care provision system including finance, elderly facility, care personnel are expanding as well. However, the role of family is still important. In 2016, 58.7% of persons requiring long-term care at home receive care from family member as their principal care-giver.

In terms of poverty eradication, we must underline the vulnerability of elderly women and the single parent households, notably headed by a mother. The Public Assistance system helps those who do not have enough income and suffering from poverty, offering cash payment, free medical and long-term care and other kinds of benefits and the proportion of recipients of this Public Assistance was 1.7% of total population in 2015, up from 1.5% in 2010. This proportion is higher for the older persons.

As for the gender equality, there are several legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex but still in terms of proportion of political representations held by women is low, 10.1% in the House of Representatives, 20.7% in the House of Councillors although they are increasing in recent years.

The unemployment rates of the youth sharply increased during the global economic crisis of 2009 then decreased smoothly afterwards and in 2017, it was 4.6% for aged 15 to 24 and 3.7% for aged 25 to 34, which was the lowest level since the end of 1990’s. Since 2015, Law on the Employment Promotion for the Youth encourages the youth employment through the dissemination of information on the youth recruitment and awarding companies with good youth employment practice.

In the face of population decline, the number of foreign residents is increasing and now the half of the Japanese population decline is offset by the increase of foreign nationals in 2016 and 2017. As for the social integration, since 2012 the foreign residents are integrated in the Basic Resident Registration for the smooth delivery of municipal services. As of May 2018, the Social Security Agreements have been enacted with 17 countries, signed with 4
countries, negotiated with 3 countries and discussed preliminary with one country. The unemployment rate of foreigners is 3.8% in 2015, slightly more than 2.5% of Japanese nationals but youth unemployment rate is lower for foreigners than Japanese.

In spite of the total population decline, the Tokyo area, the largest urban agglomeration of the world, is continuing to have the net-in-migration. In spite of the measures taken by the “Comprehensive Strategy for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing the Local Economy” since 2014, which promotes local innovation, the return migration of retirees, or the promotion of local universities and industries to ease the concentration of population to Tokyo area, the trend of excessive in-migration to Tokyo is difficult to reverse so far.

In May 2016, we have created the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Promotion Headquarters within the Prime Minister’s Office. Since then, public comments were gathered to formulate the SDGs Action Plan 2018 and the first Japan SDGs Award was granted to 12 parties including municipalities, civil societies, universities and private companies.

Also, let me talk about another governmental initiative called the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN). It is launched in 2016 to promote bilateral and regional cooperation in Asia for the development of health and long-term care in view of the regional expansion of population ageing, which stress on the long-term care system development through the international mobility of personnel and the exchange of technologies on the long-term care system, appliances, IT, robotics, and so forth.

Mister Chair,

Due to the time constraint, I only mentioned several points out of the country report of Japan. I sincerely hope there will be a productive discussion from today to Wednesday.

Thank you.