

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND JAPAN: SUSTAINABILITY OVERSHADOWS POVERTY REDUCTION

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The Development Cooperation Charter of Japan, which replaced the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter in February 2015, drives the country's cooperation towards non-poor countries and non-poverty issues. The Sustainable Development Goals put Japan forward in these directions. As a result, the country's focus on global poverty reduction is overshadowed by its national interests and sustainability under the concept of universality, which is a core principle of the Goals and differentiates them from the Millennium Development Goals.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The year 2015 will be remembered as a critical juncture in the stance of Japan towards international cooperation. In February, the Cabinet approved the Development Cooperation Charter, which replaced the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter. The concept of development cooperation is intended to cover a wider domain of cooperation than that put into "ODA". A symbolic difference between the two concepts is that while ODA highlights assistance to low-income countries, the scope of development cooperation explicitly includes middle and high income-countries. There are other differences as well, which are detailed in next section.

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In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/288 on the future we want. The resolution contained the Sustainable Development Goals, which replaced the Millennium Development Goals. As discussed in section III, the principle of universality incorporated into the Sustainable Development Goals dilutes the poverty focus among the seventeen Goals. This attenuation of focus of the Goals on poverty reduction reflects the switch from the ODA Charter to the Development Cooperation Charter of Japan. Thus, two transformations, one from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals, and the other from the ODA Charter to the Development Cooperation Charter, go hand in hand towards reducing the focus of Japan on poverty reduction in low-income countries. In the former transformation, sustainability overshadows poverty reduction, while in the latter transformation, the attention to poverty in Japan is further weakened. As shown in section III, the Government of Japan has advocated the principle of universality and, as a result, it is working to benefit Japanese nationals under the name of international cooperation. This is the main point that is argued in this article.

The above argument is formulated by analyses of published information and resources given to the author when he worked as an external consultant for the Government of Japan. The rest of this article is organized as follows. In section II, the contents of the country's new Development Cooperation Charter are described. Some distinctive features that were not included in the previous ODA Charter were introduced into the Development Cooperation Charter. In section III, the country's participation in the formation of the Sustainable Development Goals is discussed. After elaborating the open discussion process known as the Open Working Group, which was prepared for all national governments in 2014, an ad hoc consultation meeting conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for East Asian experts in March 2012 is introduced. A delegate representing the Government of Japan presented the skeleton of the proposal of Japan for the post-2015 global goals, which basically described the country's stance towards the post-2015 agenda. At the meeting, a key principle of the Goals, namely universality, was advocated by the Japanese delegate and most of the other East Asian participants. The final section concludes this article.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION CHARTER

From the ODA Charter to the Development Cooperation Charter

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been the ruling party in Japan for most of the time since the end of World War II. However, the Democratic Party of Japan

(DPJ) led the Government from 2009 through 2012. In June 2010, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) published a guiding principle for international cooperation under the administration of DPJ in a report entitled “Enhancing enlightened national interest” (MOFA, 2010). The title of the report is an indication of the DPJ-led Government’s attempt to reconcile national interests and of the openness of Japanese society to global humanitarianism.

In December 2012, LDP returned to power after a general election. The attitude of the refreshed LDP-led Government on incorporating national interests into international cooperation was similar to that of the DPJ-led Government. The most straightforward manifestation lies in the “Development Cooperation Charter”, which was approved by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in February 2015. This charter has renewed the country’s stance on international cooperation, and has superseded the ODA Charter, which was adopted in 1992 and revised in 2003. It is notable that the term “national interests”, which did not appear in the ODA Charter, was introduced in the new charter.¹

The swap of “Development Cooperation” for “ODA” in the two charters coincides with a proposed switch of “aid effectiveness” for “development effectiveness” in the principle of OECD/DAC donors, which was presented by a tripartite research group² comprised of Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States of the America at the Fourth High Level Forum for Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, the Republic of Korea, in 2011 (Kharas, Makino and Jung, 2011, p. 30). While “aid effectiveness” has been a concept related to the effectiveness of ODA to achieve goals on international development, the new concept of “development effectiveness” entails examining the effectiveness of all possible resources, not only ODA, but also private firms, philanthropists and civil society, among others, with regard to development. Thus, development effectiveness is a convenient substitute for aid effectiveness, which reduces the burdens on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) donors. In the switch from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

¹ Objectives referred to in section 1 “Basic Philosophy” of 1992 ODA Charter were poverty, humanity, freedom, human rights, democracy, peace, prosperity, environmental conservation, good governance, basic human needs and friendly relations between Japan and all other countries. Meanwhile, the objectives of ODA appearing in section 1 of 2003 ODA Charter were described as “to contribute to the peace and development of the international community, and thereby to help ensure Japan’s own security and prosperity.” Needless to say, the latter objectives contain national interests of the Japanese as indirect consequences from the country’s contribution to the peace and development of the international community.

² The three institutions are: Brookings Institution; JICA Research Institute; and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

played a leading role on behalf of the Government of Japan, as noted by Kharas, Makino and Jung (2011).

The new Development Cooperation Charter of Japan also shares the same orientation with the concept of development effectiveness in the sense that the new charter is also directed towards the alleviation of the burden on the central government. Another conspicuous feature of the charter is the expansion of coverage of the charter's goals beyond poverty reduction.

The features of the new charter are summarized by MOFA in a four page outline of the Development Cooperation Charter posted on the ministry's website.³ According to the outline, the main points of the new charter are fourfold: (a) philosophy of development cooperation (non-military cooperation; and human security, among others); (b) development cooperation in a new era (inclusive and sustainable growth) and ODA to (possibly medium and high-income) countries with special vulnerabilities; (c) development cooperation as a catalyst⁴ (partnership with private sectors, Japanese local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/civil society organizations (CSOs), and (d) participation of diverse actors in development (promotion of participation of women and other vulnerable groups of people).

Features of the new Charter

The replacement of the ODA Charter with the Development Cooperation Charter augments both the contributors and the recipients of the cooperation from Japan. Figure 1 contains a summary of the changes in the domain of the ODA and the development cooperation that was incorporated into the Development Cooperation Charter. These changes are shown on the horizontal and vertical axes. Augmentation of the "affiliated agencies" is described as the diversification of contributors on the horizontal dimension. In the new charter the "affiliated agency" is counted as a contributor of development cooperation. The vertical dimension of figure 1 exhibits a variety of recipients of Japan's development cooperation. In addition to developing countries, middle/high-income countries and Japanese private firms are added as eligible recipients of development cooperation if certain conditions are met. In subsection Burden sharing to "affiliated agencies", the involvement of the country's private sector into development cooperation is elaborated, while in subsection Shift of

³ Available from www.mofa.go.jp/files/000067702.pdf.

⁴ Note that the word "catalyse" was used in the title of the Brookings Institution-JICA-KOICA book (Kharas, Makino and Jung, 2011). This implies that the new charter was well coordinated with this book, which was published right before the Busan High Level Forum.

Japan to non-poor countries and non-poverty issues, there is a discussion on the diversification of the recipients.

Figure 1. Domain of “development cooperation”

| | | Contributors | |
|------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | Government of Japan | Private sector/local government/NGO |
| Recipients | Developing countries | ODA | Development cooperation |
| | Middle/high-income countries | Development cooperation | |
| | Japanese companies | | |

Note: The set of cells encircled by the broken line is the domain of development cooperation; ODA limited the contribution of the central government of Japan to central governments of developing countries.

Burden sharing to “affiliated agencies”

The review of the ODA Charter was announced by Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in March 2014. During the same month, the review committee for the ODA Charter was formulated, and its first meeting was held on 31 March 2014. On that date, its prospective conclusions were widely broadcast by TV stations and newspapers in Japan, even though the review has just started. The indicated main focuses of the “conclusions” were: (a) proactive contribution to achieving peace; and (b) public-private partnerships. In other words, the review committee’s discussion did not start from scratch, and the directions of the review were determined beforehand.

The point to be highlighted and explored deeply in this article is related to the second focus, public-private partnerships. More broadly, the direction of burden sharing in development efforts requested by the Government of Japan to all other parties, including members of the private sector, is a comprehensive feature of the new charter. It is stated in the charter that the Government of Japan becomes a “catalyst” rather than a main driving force (Cabinet, 2015). This direction is spelled out in the preamble of the new charter as:

(T)he term “development cooperation” refers to “international cooperation activities that are conducted by the government and its affiliated agencies for the main purpose of development in developing regions”. (Cabinet, 2015, preamble)

Thus, the charter covers cooperation activities conducted by not only the Government but also by “its affiliated agencies”.

Several “affiliated agencies” are exemplified in the new charter. The private sector is the most frequently cited agency in the charter. To achieve “national interests” by promoting Japanese industries through international cooperation, the country’s private sector is a natural choice as an “affiliated agency” for the Government. An advocating factor of this orientation is the Base of the Pyramid (BOP) argument, which claims that business with the lowest stratum of the population in terms of income may be profitable as well as help to reduce poverty (Prahalad, 2005). Therefore, the BOP argument is used to justify the burden sharing of international cooperation with the private sector. JICA established the Office for Private Sector Partnership in 2008, which subsequently was expanded as the “Private Sector Partnership and Finance Department”. This department promotes mobilization of resources from the private sector (JICA, 2010, p. 140). Since the establishment of the office, JICA has financially supported Japanese firms with ODA to conduct feasibility studies of BOP business referred to as “preparatory surveys for BOP business promotion” (JICA, 2015, p. 109).

The second and third “affiliated agencies” are local governments, NGOs and CSOs. JICA has devised schemes to mobilize the human resources of local governments, and NGOs and CSOs for years in order to use the skills and experiences of personnel in those local entities (JICA, 2014, pp. 112-113, among others). A highlight of the country’s recent collaboration with philanthropic organizations is the polio eradication project initiated in 2011 in Pakistan together with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (JICA, 2012, p. 9). This project uses a loan conversion mechanism in which the Gates Foundation repays the loan JICA extended to Pakistan if Pakistan achieves performance targets that are set in advance. This result-based project was successfully completed in 2014, and the same scheme was applied to Nigeria (JICA, 2015, p. 56).

As mentioned above, the main “affiliated agency” with which the Government of Japan expects collaboration is the Japanese private sector. Collaboration with the Japanese private sector is consistent with the newly introduced viewpoint of “national interests” in the sense that an increase in ODA funded orders to Japanese firms vitalizes the Japanese economy in the following ways: (a) direct monetary flow to

Japanese companies; and (b) the enhancement of the presence and reputation of Japanese firms in developing countries.⁵

Notably, however, even long before the term “national interests” was explicitly written in the Development Cooperation Charter, pursuit of the national interests of the Japanese through contracts of ODA projects with Japanese private firms has been identified and criticized by scholars and other OECD donors. Arase (1995), Ensign (1992), Leheny and Warren (2010, pp. 4-8), and Orr (1990) noted the tendency of Japanese ODA to be undertaken by Japanese firms and claimed that the Japanese firms were sought out not because of efficiency but out of favouritism.

A symbolic institutional setting associated ODA extended by Japan and Japanese companies is a “tied project”, which requires that its main contractors are Japanese firms. This “tying” issue has been long regarded as a key hurdle for efforts made by Japan to internationalize its government procurement procedures and make them more open to outsiders. Specifically, the ratio of untied aid to total ODA has been carefully examined by OECD/DAC. A report on an OECD peer review published in 1996 indicated that the ratio increased from 28 per cent in 1972 to 84 per cent in 1993 (OECD/DAC, 1996a, p. 37). As far as ODA loans were concerned, the untied ratio reached almost 100 per cent up to the end of the 1990s⁶ (OECD/DAC 1999, pp. 61-62). OECD/DAC was pleased that Japan became “one of the most prominent and vocal advocates of untied aid” (OECD/DAC, 1999, p. 19).

Thus, close ties between ODA extended by Japan and the country’s business sector were heavily imprinted in OECD members’ minds, making the detachment of the Japanese business sector from ODA a large challenge for Japan in efforts to convince fellow OECD members that the country is a donor up to par with most other countries. Previously, Japan made good progress in wiping out this “tied aid” practice. Now, however, the term “national interests” is explicitly installed, which reminds one of the hardly disentangled ties between ODA and business in Japan. Moreover, a new mechanism to fasten the ties, which is referred to as Special Terms for Economic

⁵ This orientation is echoed by the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, which was announced by Prime Minister Abe in May 2015. This Partnership is an initiative of the Government of Japan in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank to commit \$110 billion for high-quality infrastructure investment in Asia for five years (www.mofa.go.jp/files/000081298.pdf). This partnership covers infrastructure investments that are not financed by ODA. Emergence of China and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which was inaugurated in January 2016, as influential donors in Asia are believed to have motivated policy changes of Japan, as reflected by the partnership.

⁶ Grants extended by Japan are more likely to be tied, while technical cooperation is almost solely conducted by Japanese experts (OECD/DAC, 1996a, pp. 37-38). Carol Lancaster posed a concern that even untied projects might be consigned to Japanese subsidiary companies registered in aid recipient countries (Lancaster, 2010, pp. 39-40).

Partnership (STEP), was created in 2002. It has been applied mainly to building infrastructure.⁷ STEP is a scheme of tied loans for “raising the visibility of Japanese ODA among citizens in both recipient countries and Japan through best use of advanced technologies and know-how of Japanese firms” (cited by JICA on a website on STEP).⁸

Taking all of this into account, Japan appears to be regressing to how it was when it was an emerging donor in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, the public-private partnership proposal introduced in the Development Cooperation Charter does not appear to be something new to observers of Japanese aid.

Shift of Japan to non-poor countries and non-poverty issues

In the previous subsection, expansion of the coverage of the new Development Cooperation Charter in terms of contributors was discussed. Specifically, the domain of development cooperation was enlarged by inputs. It is notable that the domain is extended in terms of outcomes as well, which is the main issue elaborated in this subsection.⁹

First, “proactive contribution to the peace” is incorporated into the philosophy of the new charter (Cabinet, 2015). The contribution is limited to “non-military purposes”. However, this is a drastic policy change from the viewpoint of the country’s security policy. Inclusion of security-related cooperation into the concept of “development cooperation” is also new.

Second, development cooperation covers assistance to not only developing countries but also to middle and high-income countries. The following sentences in the charter spell out the wider coverage of countries to be assisted under the new charter:

Japan will extend necessary cooperation to countries based on their actual development needs and affordability. These include countries that despite progress in development, are laden with challenges that hamper sustained economic growth, notably the so-called “middle income trap,”

⁷ JICA (2013) was published as the latest update of the special terms.

⁸ Its URL is www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/types_of_assistance/oda_loans/step/index.html.

⁹ Expanding the domain of cooperation helps inflate the amount of Japanese ODA. Japan faces difficulties in raising its ratio of ODA to gross national income (GNI) to the target of 0.70 per cent, which was agreed at OECD/DAC. The country’s ODA-GNI ratio in 2013 was 0.23. To close the gap between 0.70 and 0.23, the inflation of international cooperation in terms of inputs and outputs, which is indicated in figure 1, may help.

as well as with development challenges including global challenges such as exposure to natural disasters, infectious diseases, and environmental issues and climate change; small island countries and others that are faced with special vulnerabilities despite having attained a certain level of per capita income (Subsection II (2) Priority policy issues by region of the Development Cooperation Charter).

Now “despite having attained a certain level of per capita income”, Japan may provide assistance to middle and high-income countries. Thus, substantially developed countries may receive “development cooperation” from Japan.¹⁰

This diversion of the domain of “development cooperation” is combined with the emphasis on the national interests of Japan. A plausible consequence of this combination is an increase in assistance to non-poor countries for non-development purposes. The “development cooperation” defined in the new Development Cooperation Charter is expanded beyond the concept of “development” that has been maintained by the international community.¹¹

Lastly, Japanese companies, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs), are counted as partners of the Government for development cooperation (Cabinet, 2015). As a result, Japanese SMEs have been treated as recipients of Japanese ODA more openly. Even before the new charter was established, ODA had been granted to Japanese companies as long as the activities of the Japanese companies were conducive to international development, for example, in the context of BOP business promotion. Upon the replacement of the ODA Charter with the Development Cooperation Charter, the portion of ODA delivered to Japanese SMEs is highlighted more in newspapers and broadcast programmes.

As a result, the number of expected recipients of development cooperation under the new charter had expanded, as described in the vertical axis of figure 1. In addition to developing countries, “ODA graduated countries” are also covered as

¹⁰ There are so-called “pockets of poverty” even in middle-income countries. Moreover, as poverty is multifaceted, there may be pockets of poverty in terms of, for example, health, education and human rights, besides that in income in higher-income countries. The author admits that the international community should pay close attention to this challenge. Nevertheless, it is no doubt that middle and high-income countries are in a better position to take care of the poor in their countries than low-income countries. In addition, projects which are about to be delivered by Japan, are not those associated with the pockets of poverty in recipient countries. A symbolic aid to be granted in this context is a water purification project using high technology of the permeation membrane conducted in an oil-rich Middle East country.

¹¹ For example, a relevant goal from the viewpoint of “development” of the United Nations is incorporated into preamble of the United Nations Charter is written as “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

recipients of development cooperation if they have “special vulnerabilities”. Examples of the “special vulnerabilities” are the middle-income trap and climate change. On top of that, Japanese private firms have become entitled to be recipients of development cooperation if their business activities are considered to contribute to international development. In conclusion, the domain of development cooperation is enlarged in terms of both contributors (agents for inputs) and recipients (agents for outcomes).¹²

III. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND JAPAN

Formation of Sustainable Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals, which have been a focus of international cooperation around the world since the beginning of this Millennium, were superseded by the Sustainable Development Goals, according to the General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals consist of seventeen goals that are classified into the following five categories: people; planet; prosperity; peace; and partnership. The seventeen goals are briefly summarized by the United Nations as follows: (1) no poverty; (2) zero hunger; (3) good health and well-being; (4) quality education; (5) gender equality; (6) clean water and sanitation; (7) affordable and clean energy; (8) decent work and economic growth; (9) industry, innovation and infrastructure; (10) reduced inequality; (11) sustainable cities and communities; (12) responsible consumption and production; (13) climate action; (14) life below water; (15) life on land; (16) peace, justice and strong institutions; and (17) partnerships for the goals.

The process to formulate the Millennium Development Goals was criticized as not being open and transparent, particularly to people in the developing world.¹³ The origin of the Millennium Development Goals was the International Development Goals

¹² There may be a counter argument that the mobilization of resources of the private sector is potentially beneficial to the poor in developing countries and is in accordance with principles of the Sustainable Development Goals. The author agrees with this argument. However, it is important to note that this argument is associated with the participation of the private sector as a contributor to international development as described in the horizontal axis of figure 1. Under the Development Cooperation Charter, the private sector is counted as a recipient of Japanese aid as well, as shown in the vertical axis of the figure. This latter feature is beyond the principle of the Goals, and justified only in the case that the private sector and beneficiaries in developing countries are “win-win”. Even in this case, there is no automatic guarantee that “win” of the latter is greater than that of the former. There is no enforcing mechanism to guarantee “win-win” because the “win” to the private sector is to be given at onset of the project while that to the beneficiaries becomes present gradually and slowly afterwards.

¹³ This weakness was admitted by the United Nations. See United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2012, pp. 46-47).

proposed by the OECD/DAC in 1996 (OECD/DAC, 1996b, pp. 8-11). The basic structure of the International Development Goals was followed for the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, examination of the Millennium Development Goals was undertaken by high officials of developed countries and did not involve representative of developing countries.

Addressing this weakness, the formulation of the post-2015 framework was designed to give opportunities to everyone in the world to respond. Discussions on the subject became active in 2011. As early as June 2012, the basic concept of the new goals was determined as the “Sustainable Development Goals” at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which is known as Rio+20. Three levels of consultation were conducted after Rio+20. They involved (a) eminent persons; (b) general public; and (c) business sector. The high-level consultation was assigned to the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which was co-chaired by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in July 2012. The report of the panel was released in May 2013 (High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2013). The consultation for the general public was carried out through an online platform named “The world we want”, and in face-to-face consultations taking place in various countries, including developing nations. Consultations with the business sector were made through the United Nations Global Compact with which thousands of companies and organizations are affiliated from all around the world.

Finalization of the goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals was made by the Open Working Group Meeting on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG-SDGs, hereafter), which was an intergovernmental meeting among United Nations member and observer States. OWG-SDGs was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2013. The first session of OWG-SDGs was held in May 2013. By July 2014, thirteen OWG-SDGs sessions had been organized.¹⁴ Its outcome document was released in August 2014 (see A/68/970). OWG-SDGs adopted a unique consensus-building method in that member countries were encouraged to form a group of countries composed of one to four members voluntarily, and each group was supposed to submit proposals on goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals to OWG-SDGs. In the end, thirty groups were formed. Japan formed a group with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Nepal.

¹⁴ In addition to officers of MOFA, officers of JICA were also mobilized to serve on the team of Japan participating in OWG-SDGs.

The proposals submitted by the thirty groups and some other eligible participants up to the tenth session of OWG-SDGs (31 March – 4 April 2014) are compiled in a report entitled *Encyclopedia Groupinica* (OWG-SDGs, 2014a). Those proposals were narrowed down into the final report of OWG-SDGs, which was released right before a General Assembly session held in September 2014 (OWG-SDGs, 2014b). The seventeen goals proposed in OWG-SDGs (2014b) were adopted. They were the same as those of the final version of the Sustainable Development Goals, while some of the 169 targets were revised. Thus, the proposal by OWG-SDGs (2014b) can be taken as the “almost final” version of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The approach of Japan to the formation of the Sustainable Development Goals

Inputs of Japan to the Open Working Group

The Open Working Group was the final and a transparent opportunity for national governments to express their views and opinions on the Sustainable Development Goals. The number of “focus areas” in *Encyclopedia Groupinica*, which were narrowed down to the “Goals” of the Sustainable Development Goals, were nineteen rather than seventeen. The number of proposed targets was about 2,000, which were refined to 169 in the end. Thus, most countries took OWG-SDGs as the final and an important opportunity to affect the substance of the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, Japan proposed only three draft targets (OWG-SDGs, 2014a). This contribution was extremely small in comparison to the total number (about 2,000) of draft targets. The Islamic Republic of Iran/Japan/Nepal group did not submit any joint proposals of targets. Apart from that group, the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed thirteen targets. Nepal did not propose any targets by itself. However, Nepal belongs to Group of 77¹⁵ and least developed countries, both of which collectively submitted many proposals.

Thus, the explicit and open contribution of Japan to the draft Sustainable Development Goals appears to be very limited; all three targets submitted by Japan were related to universal health coverage.¹⁶

¹⁵ Group of 77 was established among developing countries in 1964 to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

¹⁶ Japan advocates universal health coverage. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe contributed twice to *The Lancet*, a reputed medical journal, to promote this concept (Abe, 2013; 2015).

Post-2015 to be development focused or universal?

Needless to say, OWG-SDGs was not the only a mechanism that brought forward the views of Governments. As mentioned above, the replacement of the Millennium Development Goals by the Sustainable Development Goals had already been determined at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012. Consultations by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the post-2015 development agenda were conducted even before Rio+20.

One such consultation meeting was organized by UNDP in March 2012 in Japan. Among the participants were east Asian experts, including ex-ministers. Though the title of the meeting was the “East Asian Regional Consultation on the Human Development Reports and Measurement of Progress”, a focal issue was on how the post-2015 global goals should take shape (UNDP, 2012). The author of this report participated in this meeting.

A critical question raised by UNDP was whether the new goals should be “development-focused”, similar to the Millennium Development Goals, or be “universal”. According to UNDP (2012), some stakeholders saw the Millennium Development Goals as being less “universal”, and that the new goals should be universal in nature.

The concept of universality implies that the new goals should be directed for all people in the world; as compared with the Millennium Development Goals, which focused only on the poor in developing countries. It is notable that Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals, develop a global partnership for development, was assumed to be mainly pursued by developed countries. Therefore, borrowing from the words of Abraham Lincoln, the Millennium Development Goals were pursued “for the poor people by all (poor and rich) people”. Those advocating universality requested that the new goals be “for all people by all people”.

There is concern that the principle of universality weakens the “development-focus” in the Sustainable Development Goals. The Note by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (UNEP and OHCHR, 2015), which was written to advocate the principle of universality, admits people “have expressed a concern that universality could potentially undermine the focus on the poorest”.

The question of whether the new goals should be universal or development-focused was posed at the above-mentioned East Asian regional consultation meeting organized by UNDP in March 2012. The predominant view expressed at the meeting was for universality. This response is understandable, taking into account that most of

the East Asian countries have made good progress in reducing poverty, with many of them graduating to middle-income countries.

A delegate of the Government of Japan to the meeting, who also agreed with the universality principle, presented the country's proposal of post-2015 global goals. It was entitled "Pact for Global Well-being". Under this proposal, environmental sustainability, disaster risk management, economic growth and equity were incorporated into the concept of "well-being". Human security, which has been a central feature of the country's international cooperation since the then Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi used this term in a speech and established the "Trust Fund for Human Security" for the United Nations in December 1998,¹⁷ was embedded in the proposal. Food security, special treatments for fragile States, green growth, inclusive growth, shared growth, knowledge-based growth, employment and infrastructure were proposed to be key parts of the concepts.

There are interesting similarities and differences between the proposal of Japan and the final form of the Sustainable Development Goals. The most visible difference is the overarching concept of new global goals, namely sustainable development and well-being. It is impressive that the delegate of Japan proposed the concept of well-being for the new global goals just three months before the Sustainable Development Goals were finalized in June 2012 at Rio+20. It is likely that the delegate of Japan was not informed that the United Nations discussion had been inclined towards sustainable development. Nevertheless, as noted above, there are many items in common between the proposal of Japan's and the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, equity, economic growth, employment and even infrastructure and energy were incorporated in the Goals and disaster risk management was incorporated in some targets under some goals. Thus, some of the intentions of Japan with regard to the post-2015 global goals were reflected in the final version of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Above all, it is noticeable that the feature of universality, advocated by Japan, was applied in setting the Sustainable Development Goals. It is clear that Japan wanted to ensure that the new global goals would also be aimed at assisting the Japanese that were left out as beneficiaries from the Millennium Development Goals.

¹⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan has set up a website that gives a summary of the activities undertaken by Japan on human security: www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human_secu/chronology.html.

IV. CONCLUSION

The concept of universality underlying the Sustainable Development Goals is defended by its interpretation as “no one left behind”. The Japanese interpret this as even the Japanese are not left behind. As a result, the Goals are the latest and most comprehensive global goals endorsed by the Government of Japan to pursue the welfare of the people of Japan. This endorsement by the external factor was harmonious with the explicit introduction of national interests into the Development Cooperation Charter.

The country’s foreign policy is often analysed by momenta stemming from internal and external factors (Lancaster, 2010, among others). The Japanese language has terms for internal and foreign pressures, namely *naiatsu* and *gaiatsu*, respectively. A typical *gaiatsu* comes from the United States of America, which intends to use the international cooperation activities of Japan to complement United States foreign policy (Lancaster, 2010). As for replacement of the ODA Charter with the Development Cooperation Charter, a *gaiatsu* (an external factor), which is the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goals, was in unison with *naiatsu*, the pursuit of national interests.

The Millennium Development Goals were a *raison d’être* for Japan to contribute to poverty reduction in the world. Replacing the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals enables Japan to formulate a more self-oriented international cooperation policy. The new Development Cooperation Charter has a wider scope designed to serve non-poor countries and address non-poverty issues by incorporating profit-seeking actors. The motivation of national interests is openly spelled out in the new charter. In the shadow of rising tides of sustainability and public-private partnerships, the prior orientation towards poverty reduction is diluted. The country’s efforts involving national interests are facilitated by the Sustainable Development Goals principle of universality, which appears to be seemingly non-controversial under the slogan “no one left behind”. The problem is that this slogan covers up the dilution of the focus on poverty reduction through the Goals and makes it difficult for global citizens to notice the common orientation of the Goals and the Development Cooperation Charter, which openly publicizes the country’s pursuit of national interests through “development cooperation”.

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