

TEXT OF SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF JAPAN

(Ms Nagoaka) Fourth plenary meeting, 19 May

Agenda item 3: Address by Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General

Ms Nagoaka (Japan):

Chairperson, Director-General Dr. Chan, ladies and gentlemen:

I am honoured to speak here on behalf of the Japanese government.

First, I wish to commend Director-General Dr. Chan for her leadership. In recent years, global health issues have become increasingly complex. In addition to the Ebola outbreak in Western Africa, we have witnessed a growing burden of noninfectious diseases and inequalities in access to health care services worldwide. We believe that further efforts are needed in order for WHO to continue playing a leadership role in global health governance. Japan will lend its full cooperation to such efforts.

We highly commend WHO for embarking on fundamental organizational reforms in response to questions regarding its future global role. External evaluations of WHO's response to the recent Ebola outbreak will be presented at this assembly. We hope that these evaluations will compel WHO to analyze its response in detail. We also hope that WHO will identify priority issues that need to be tackled to effectively leverage its presence as an eminent UN and technical agency in the health field. Japan will lend its full support so that WHO can achieve reliable and rapid reform.

Although Japan provides financial assistance with the aim of resolving global health-related issues, we also wish to strengthen our personnel contributions. Despite being WHO's second largest financial contributor, Japan has long been underrepresented within the organization. Although efforts have been made to improve this issue, we believe that further efforts are necessary.

Chairperson, we highly commend the fact that the building of strong health systems has been raised as a central theme at this assembly.

Due to the deterioration of unstable health care systems in one of the poorest regions of the world, many lives were lost during the recent Ebola outbreak. Rapidly aging societies and non-communicable diseases are becoming more prevalent, and many countries are struggling under these burdens. Therefore, we believe that achieving universal health coverage is critically important.

In this regard, building strong health care systems is an urgent issue for both developing and developed countries. Due to declining birthrates and aging populations, even developed countries are finding it difficult to maintain their existing health care systems.

Japan is the oldest society in the world, with persons aged 60 years and older accounting for over 30% of the population. By 2020, the entire baby boom generation will be in their seventies, and each worker will be supporting one senior citizen. To meet this challenge, Japan will continue to examine a variety of ways to maintain our health care system. Although efforts that concentrate on specific diseases and fields are important, it is also necessary to shift to an integrated health system throughout a person's lifetime. Our primary aim is to build a strong and resilient health system.

At the end of September 2015, the UN will adopt the post-2015 development agenda, which will prescribe the UN's overall direction for development. The health-related goals of the agenda will chart the course for future public health. Due to inequalities in health care and the rapid diversification of disease, universal health coverage is more important than ever. Therefore, Japan will contribute to discussions in the international community with the hope of ensuring the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.

Chairperson, other UN agencies, newly established public-private partnerships, and a growing number of private donors have become involved in the health field, and thus the global health landscape continues to be transformed. These changes are becoming clearer, as evidenced by the response to the recent Ebola outbreak. Japan strongly believes that WHO's leadership in the field of global health will continue to improve public health for all humankind. Japan will therefore actively support WHO in the hope that their activities may take on even greater meaning. Thank you for your attention.