

TEXT OF SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF JAPAN

(Mr Otsuka) Fourth plenary meeting, 17 May

Agenda item 3: Address by the Director-General

Mr OTSUKA (Japan):

President, Director-General Dr Chan, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to highly commend Dr Chan and WHO for their outstanding leadership in global health. In their addresses yesterday, the President and the Director-General referred to the disaster in Japan and I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to them.

On March 11th, Japan suffered a disastrous earthquake of magnitude 9.0 and a tsunami. Then, the earthquake and tsunami led to the serious accident at the nuclear power plant. As a result of these disasters, approximately 25 000 people lost their lives or are still missing. More than 110 000 people are still staying at evacuation centres, and about 60 000 houses and buildings were completely demolished. The destruction was enormous. Meanwhile, although the number of deaths due to the accident at the nuclear plant is zero, people near the nuclear power plant have had to evacuate their homes due to the accident.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the governments of many nations, international organizations, including WHO, and people from all over the world, for their heartfelt sympathy and encouragement, physical and material support, and contributions to the people of Japan who are suffering from this unprecedented disaster. Although it was attributable to the natural disaster – the tsunami – Japan, as a member of the international community, apologizes for the large release of radioactive material into the air and sea that resulted from the nuclear power plant accident.

With regard to the accident in the nuclear facilities at the Fukushima power plant caused by this disaster, Japan is sharing information with WHO in accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005) in addition to reporting to IAEA. During this Health Assembly, today, we will be explaining the details about the public health risks, and the measures which Japan has been taking, at the technical briefing on radiation and public health. Japan continues to make every effort to provide information immediately and accurately to the international community. Consequently, Japan would like to request Member States and related organizations to take appropriate measures based on scientific evidence and to collaborate with Japan.

Making progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including the reduction of mortality among infants and pregnant women, is important. Therefore, Prime Minister Kan announced concrete promises in health at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals last September. This “Kan Commitment” contains a new policy, aiming to achieve the Goals through sustainable health system strengthening. Additionally, this coming June, an international conference is scheduled in Tokyo to follow up on this high-level plenary meeting. Japan would like to continue to support the emphasis on maternal and child health, and the measures against infectious diseases.

In addition to taking measures against infectious diseases such as controlling three major infectious diseases, and expanding immunization, the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases – such as diabetes, stroke and myocardial infarction – is becoming an important item on the health agenda. Sharing experiences on noncommunicable diseases among Member States is important.

An international ministerial conference was held last month, organized and hosted by the Government of the Russian Federation and WHO. I expect that the outcomes of the conference will be conveyed to the United Nations General Assembly this September, and that measures in each State will be strengthened. In Japan, various stakeholders are together undertaking comprehensive activities for health promotion, and involving the Government, administrative organizations, private companies, the education sector, local communities and others. We would like to continue to share our experiences, information and skills actively with Member States.

In recent years, the health agenda has been becoming more complex; it is therefore necessary to strengthen the entire health system, including building up human resources for health. This effort should go beyond dealing with individual diseases and specific areas; it is also necessary for Member States, international organizations and other stakeholders to work together. In this situation, the roles and responsibilities of WHO will be greater. In order for WHO to accomplish its role effectively and efficiently, we look forward to the WHO reforms led by the Director-General, Dr Chan. In Japan we will continue to bolster our efforts in supporting WHO in order for WHO to contribute to the people all over the world and to public health.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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