

Statement of H.E. Mr. Kenichi SUGANUMA
Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan
for the Intergovernmental event for Member States on the occasion of the
60th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
and the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of
Statelessness, 7-8 December PM

Mr. Chair,

Japan joins other States parties in warmly congratulating UNHCR on the 60th anniversary. This year is also a milestone for Japan itself, being the 30th anniversary of Japan's accession to the Convention.

Japan offers its condolences for the UNHCR staff who died in the recent suicide bombing in Kandahar, Afghanistan. As security situations worsen and humanitarian space around the world continues to shrink, we once again would like to pay tribute to UNHCR staff for their dedicated work amidst very challenging conditions.

On the occasion of High Commissioner Guterres' visit to Japan in November, the Diet, both Upper and Lower Houses, adopted by unanimous vote a resolution expressing Japan's continued commitment to playing a leading role in improving refugee protection and achieving a solution to refugee issues. Japan is the first country in the world whose parliament has adopted such resolutions.

Despite the Great East Japan Earthquake, Japan has made its largest-ever contribution to the agency this year and continues to be its second-largest donor. Japan reiterates its commitment to continue its financial contribution to UNHCR to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. Chair,

Japan has been emphasizing the importance of coordination between humanitarian and development agencies with the aim of achieving the "human security" of each refugee. A seamless transition from humanitarian to development aid helps to promote the voluntary and safe return of

refugees and their smooth reintegration into society. For this purpose, Japan is committed to promoting further collaboration between UNHCR, other humanitarian organizations and JICA.

Japan is not a big refugee hosting country. But even before its accession to the Convention, Japan began providing assistance to refugees through UNHCR in 1967, and Japan first received Indo-Chinese refugees in 1978. To the present, Japan has received 11,000 refugees, most of whom are now settled in Japan. Among them is a group working to assist victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake, based on a wish to express gratitude to Japan and the Japanese people for their long-time support.

Mr. Chair,

With its accession to the Convention in 1981, Japan passed national legislation to set up schemes to protect refugees in Japan. Going beyond the protection requirements of the Convention, Japan provides housing and living expenses to underprivileged asylum seekers during the process of refugee status determination (RSD). In order for those who have been recognized as refugees to smoothly settle into Japanese society, various assistance and counseling services for local integration are provided.

Japan adheres to the policy of recognizing swiftly and decisively the refugee status of asylum seekers fleeing their countries due to political persecution. Again, going beyond the scope of the Convention, Japan is doing its best to guarantee protection by granting permanent residence status to persons not officially recognized as refugees who nonetheless require consideration on humanitarian grounds.

In order to guarantee swift and appropriate RSD procedures, Japan has pledged to:

- a) enhance training of refugee status inspectors;
- b) both publicize and enhance data collection concerning refugees' countries of origin and refugee-producing situations throughout the world;
- c) accelerate RSD procedures to increase confidence in the system;
- d) provide information on RSD procedures to asylum seekers; and
- e) solve issues related to detention during the RSD process.

Finally, beginning last year, Japan began a 3-year pilot resettlement project, accepting Myanmarese refugees from the Mae La Camp in Thailand. The second group of these refugees arrived in Japan this September and they are currently taking part in a six-month assistance program. With the continuing cooperation of UNHCR, we are working to improve and enrich the support program for resettled refugees in Japan for the success of this first-ever program of its kind in Asia. We will also continue to work to see such efforts spread to other countries in Asia.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.