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“The Future of the United Nations”

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February 16, 2005

Thank you for your very kind introduction. It is my honor and great pleasure to speak to such a distinguished group of people as the Foreign Policy Association, representing diverse sectors of American leadership. I would like to express my gratitude to President Noel Lateef for organizing today’s meeting, with such distinguished co-speakers as UN Under-Secretary-General Dr. Ibrahim Gambari and Professor Michael Doyle.

Your Association was founded almost a century ago in 1918, and it has always aimed to serve as a catalyst for developing awareness, understanding and informed opinion on U.S. foreign policy and global issues. Since its inception, the Association has witnessed the establishment of the League of Nations, the Second World War, the Cold War and the post Cold-War period in the 1990s, and now, the challenges of the post-Nine-Eleven world. I believe the Association has made many valuable contributions in its noble mission to help enrich American leadership in foreign affairs, and for that allow me to express my profound respect.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I would like to touch upon some of the problems dealt with in the two important reports submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations recently, and share with you some of my perspectives based on experience gained during my tenure as Foreign Minister, which ended not long ago. Closely related to this is the question of UN reform, and, most importantly, reform of the Security Council, on which I shall elaborate.

I believe now is the right time to have this discussion especially because 2005 is a milestone that marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the UN. From essentially being a war-victors' organization of 51 original members at its inception in 1945, it has grown into a truly universal organization of 191 nations today. A sea change has taken place in the UN over the decades, not only in its composition, but, remarkably, in the geopolitical realities and balances of power surrounding the world body. World leaders will meet in September to review progress in the Millennium Declaration adopted five years ago at a UN summit held at the start of the new millennium. It will be an opportunity to celebrate, as the Japanese might say, the UN's "Kanreki" – a reference to individuals reaching their happy 60th birthday, the end of a full cycle of the Oriental zodiac. But, more significantly, we hope that it will serve as a precious opportunity for reaching important decisions concerning the future of the organization – decisions that will ensure that it better reflects new realities, and is more effective and responsive in meeting the serious threats and challenges the world faces today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The "High-level Panel Report on Threats, Challenges and Change", produced by 16 eminent persons, and the so-called "Millennium Project Report", authored by numerous development experts led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, have been much commented upon. The former concerns the issues of a new international collective security, and we think it contains excellent recommendations. The latter provides a plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and we

share many of the concerns raised in the report and support many of its observations.

Taken together, the key underlying notion is that international peace and security issues are closely linked with international development problems in today's globalized world. The idea that there is a close inter-connectedness between international peace and security and development is not new in itself, but the realization that this linkage must be squarely faced and dealt with, realistically and effectively, is perhaps enlightening.

For example, poverty is not just a result of economic underdevelopment; it is closely related to under-funding of such sectors as health, education and water, which are essential to nation-building. Poverty is often both the cause and the result of failing governance, weak institutions and corruption, and poverty-stricken populations, confronted with social injustice and unfairness, can easily fall prey to extremist influence and be exploited by international terrorists, their communities becoming hotbeds for recruitment and training. We therefore should not be indifferent to the underdevelopment or poverty of a country, even if that country is remote from us.

In the present state of inter-connectedness, no one country, however powerful or wealthy, even a super-power, can effectively shield itself from the impact of this linkage; only through concerted action and international cooperation can the international community tackle such a wide range of threats and challenges effectively.

As far as Japan's position on the nexus of peace and development is concerned, we are of the view that peace and development are two sides of the same coin, and Japan is fully committed to ensuring the peace, security and prosperity of the international community by devoting itself to development cooperation. Recent examples of such cooperation are reconstruction assistance in Iraq and our rapid response to the earthquake off Sumatra and the ensuing tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean. Japan has been addressing such critical issues in an expeditious and steadfast manner. Japan will also continue to make the same sort of resolute efforts to achieve the MDGs. To that end, we will strive to

continue to increase the level of ODA, making Japan the biggest donor country in terms of the accumulated volume of its ODA over the last ten years.

In addressing the issues discussed in the reports, the United Nations system must play a central role, because it is the only universal body, and it is the only body that is so constituted that it can provide the kind of authority and legitimacy needed for the decisions it takes. Without such authority and legitimacy, the world will find it difficult, if not impossible, to garner the political will, mobilize the necessary resources and deploy the needed capacity for truly global cooperation and an effective response.

We also acknowledge that the world body is in need of comprehensive reform, 60 years after its founding, of its main organs – in particular the Security Council. The Secretariat must also improve in terms of both management and efficiency. In arguing for UN reform, we must remember, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan likes to remind us, that the UN can be as good, strong or effective as the Member States want it to be. He is right in saying this, because we must remember that the world body is a member states organization through and through, and not an independent or self-governing entity. And here, needless to say, the commitment of and the role played by important or influential Member States, such as the US and Japan, must be recognized as particularly important.

In passing, I note that UN bashing is again on the rise, fueled by scandals involving the Oil-for-Food program in Iraq and reports of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in the Congo. These are all very serious, damaging charges against the UN, and they must be vigorously followed up for effective response. Flaws and weaknesses found to exist in the organization must be addressed forcefully as well. For all these additional reasons, it is all the more important to reform the UN so that it will be a better and more effective body, equipped to deal with the multifaceted problems and the new threats and challenges of the 21st century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to touch on several points that Japan considers of particular importance in addressing security and development challenges and seeking to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations.

The first is consolidation of peace in countries in transition from conflict to peace and development. Prevention of conflict in the first place is of the utmost importance, but where a conflict has occurred, the UN is expected to assist countries emerging from conflict to find peace, keep peace and consolidate peace. This is an area I paid close attention to as Foreign Minister of Japan, working closely with the UN and other partners. East Timor and Afghanistan come to mind immediately. Japan was also involved in Cambodia, Kosovo and Sri Lanka, among other critical areas. The efforts deployed to assist these countries in transition have included assisting refugees and internally displaced people, protecting civilian populations against the threat of landmines, helping former combatants to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate into society, and providing rehabilitation, reconstruction and development assistance and support for institution-building. Large amounts of Official Development Assistance (ODA) have been mobilized to address the needs in specific situations.

In this connection, the High-level Panel Report has advanced the interesting idea of setting up, as a gap-filling measure in the UN system, a Peace-building Commission, to provide a coherent strategy for the international community's response to challenges posed by the transition from war to peace. We support the idea in principle, and believe that an innovative mechanism should be found that would effectively involve the key organs, particularly the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, perhaps through establishing a joint body of the two.

The second issue recognized as essential to addressing security and development challenges was advancing the concept of "human security" as a critical element in our common efforts to meet the new threats and challenges that I described earlier. In this globalized world, no country and no individual can be free from threats, however strong the country may be, or however tight the state

security. An approach that emphasizes human security seeks for ideas and measures to secure the safety of each individual, rather than the security of each state. The essence of this approach is “protection and empowerment”, and it is especially important that people be empowered so that they can stand on their own feet, free from threats. We have to recognize that we must address both freedom from fear and freedom from want.

Then, you may ask, how can we protect and empower the people, what are the concrete measures? Of course, each country, each community, each individual has its own environment, and the difficulties and threats each one is facing are different. We should not adopt a cookie-cutter approach; we have to devise a differentiated and multi-sectoral approach. Japan has launched the “African Village Initiative” or “AVI”. This initiative, based on the notion of human security, aims at empowering local communities to meet their own needs in close collaboration with other partners. It will take the form of a combination of a core project and a series of multi-sectoral projects. For example, a school construction project is implemented in close collaboration with supporting programs such as school meal programs, well excavation and health care services, so that the entire community is empowered, with the school as its core. Experimental projects of this kind have already been implemented. I believe that this initiative will make a good case for the promotion of “human security”.

Third, the High-level Panel Report listed six threats that the international community faces, namely poverty, inter-state conflict, internal conflict, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and transnational organized crime. However, our recent experience has shown that we also face a seventh threat, that posed by natural disasters, and the devastation wrought by the Indian Ocean Tsunami in late December laid bare the nature and scope of this threat.

This devastating calamity, affecting so many countries and people simultaneously, has taught the world one lesson: while no force on earth can prevent natural events from occurring, it is within our capacity to take measures to reduce and minimize the impact of these events, particularly on the poor and weak, through enhanced international cooperation for disaster prevention and reduction,

including early warning. Integrating disaster reduction in national development strategies is now recognized as essential. Prime Minister Koizumi's initiative for disaster reduction cooperation announced during the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan, last month, was an effort to promote this idea.

Ladies and gentlemen,

All the issues that I touched upon earlier must be effectively dealt with by the United Nations.

However, would the United Nations in its current form be the most suitable organ for that undertaking?

Last fall, our Prime Minister addressed the UN General Assembly and called for the creation of "A New United Nations for the New Era" – a strong and effective United Nations that is capable of coping with the challenges we face in today's world. And he made it clear, along with the leaders of Germany, India, and Brazil, that those four countries would work closely together with the aim of gaining permanent seats in a reformed and expanded Security Council.

Perhaps few Member States have experienced such a dramatic change in their relationship to the UN as Japan. As the original members met in San Francisco in June 1945 to adopt the UN Charter, Japan was still fighting a desperate war in the Pacific theatre. Two months after the San Francisco conference, the world's first atomic bombs were dropped on two Japanese cities, and the war ended. Eleven years later, in 1956, Japan was admitted to the UN as a re-born nation and has since been a faithful, dedicated member of the organization, adopting multilateral cooperation through the UN as one of its major foreign policy pillars.

As Japan's economy and standing grew, so did its financial contributions to the UN, to the point where, today, as citizens of the world's number two economic power, Japanese taxpayers contribute close to 20% of the UN's regular budget, as against the 22% share of the United States. Do you know

that Japan pays more than the four permanent members of the Security Council – namely, the UK, France, Russia and China combined? I'm quoting these figures here just to underline the extent of the extraordinary change that has taken place in my country's relationship to the United Nations, transforming Japan from a former enemy state to the number two contributor nation within the organization.

Not limiting itself to financial assistance, Japan has also aspired to play an active role in global efforts to confront today's challenges, such as countering terrorism, fighting the spread of weapons of mass destruction, alleviating poverty, preventing infectious diseases and halting environmental degradation. Japan is the largest aid donor, shouldering close to one fifth of the total volume of development assistance for the last ten years. Paying heed to the provisions of our constitution, Japan has limited its international cooperation activities largely to civilian, non-military domains such as humanitarian assistance, development and post-conflict reconstruction. And in recent years we have engaged increasingly in UN peacekeeping operations and post-conflict peace-building missions authorized by the UN involving our Self-Defense Forces personnel and assets.

Next year, 2006, will be a milestone year for us in that we in Japan will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of our entry into the UN. It will be an opportunity for us to take stock, but also to affirm Japan's position and influence in the international community based on the record of its commitment and contributions, and to rededicate ourselves to the ideals and objectives of the UN, as the organization tries to rise to the challenges of the times, including its own reform.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called for reform of the UN to be completed within this year, and we support his call. Member States have over these many years invested enormous time, energy and resources to make the UN more effective and the Security Council more representative and transparent. We believe the time is approaching for the Member States to recoup this investment by taking concrete action and reaching a decision this year.

As for the expansion of the Security Council, the High-level Panel Report has offered two options. Model A proposes expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. Model B, on the other hand, avoids creating a new permanent category and instead proposes the creation of a new non-permanent category, but with a longer and renewable term of 4 years rather than the current 2-year term. Both models propose expanding the size of the Security Council by 9 members, increasing the total membership from 15 to 24. Both models provide that in 2020, 15 years hence, the composition of the Council will be reviewed. Neither proposal assigns the veto power to new members.

Member States aspiring to become permanent members of the Security Council, including Japan, is in favor of expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent seats of the Council. It seems to us that the debate on this critical issue in the UN to date has demonstrated that there is a widely shared view that the composition of the membership must reflect the realities of today's world, and not of 1945. This situation is an anachronism that must be corrected in the interest of the whole membership, especially if this important body that is primarily responsible for international peace and security is to be more effective and credible. During the course of the General Assembly debate last year, an overwhelming majority of Member States, some 166 countries (87%), spoke of the need to reform the Security Council, and a significant majority, 113 countries (60%), favored expanding the Council membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. This clearly indicates the direction that Member State sentiment on this issue is taking.

We will make a determined effort to work toward UN reform, toward Security Council reform. We will work hard to gain for ourselves a permanent seat in a reformed Council within the current year. We believe it is appropriate and just for us to demand inclusion in the Council as a permanent member, and we believe this is also in the interest of the UN itself and the international community as a whole.

Japan is grateful to the US for its support, as expressed by US administrations on such occasions as

Japan-US summit meetings and meetings of the Japanese Foreign Minister and the US Secretary of State, of the legitimacy of Japan's bid to gain a permanent seat in the Security Council.

In view of Japan's status as a close ally of the US, its bid to acquire a permanent seat in the Security Council has positive implications for the pursuit of common agendas such as the promotion of freedom and democracy in the arena of the UN, which represents multilateralism. As Japan and the US demonstrated in coping with the issues in Iraq and Afghanistan, Japan's position as a permanent member of the Security Council is likely to further strengthen the Japan-US alliance in the global context. Japan can also bring to the question of international peace and collective security perspective, experience and resources which may be different from those the US, as the world's sole super-power, can bring to bear, but are nevertheless unique and valuable in the pursuit of the ideals and goals of the United Nations. And there is no reason to think that this should not also contribute positively to the alliance between our two countries, cooperating in Asia and beyond.

At the 58th session of the General Assembly in September 2003, I proposed from the tribune of the UN that the leaders of the Member States make a political decision on United Nations reform in 2005, which marks the 60th anniversary of the inception of the organization. I remain hopeful that this important task will be fulfilled. This anniversary year must be transformed into a year of real action and decision. We must not be disappointed, nor must we disappoint those voiceless hundreds of millions of people around the world who harbor the hope and expectation that the UN can help them meet their needs and attain their ideals. The US and Japan have important, shared work to do in this noble endeavor.

Thank you.