

**The 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee  
(Statements by Japan)**

**Agenda item 4(a): International Protection**

Madam Chair,

Japan expresses its appreciation to UNHCR for its tireless efforts to provide protection for persons of concern, and in particular, it pays tribute to the staff in the field for their resilience to continue to “stay and deliver” under severe and challenging conditions.

Since the spread of COVID-19, we have been witnessing unprecedented challenges and impacts on international protection. Japan reiterates its appreciation for UNHCR’s continuous efforts to ensure access to fair asylum procedures by engaging in dialogues with and providing technical support to the relevant authorities. Japan also welcomes the innovative approach by UNHCR to adapt to drastically changing situations. We believe that the lessons learned from its experiences over the past year will make UNHCR’s operations more efficient and effective.

Madam Chair,

We recognize the fact that there are many different protection needs and challenges for each individual due to the complexity of displacement and factors of age, gender and diversity (AGD). In particular, an increase in GBV since the beginning of the pandemic has been among the biggest concerns. Japan appreciates UNHCR having doubled its efforts to prevent and respond to GBV, fully taking into account the vulnerability of women and girls who are easily exposed to exploitation and abuse. In addition, it is encouraging to see the engagement by displaced women and refugee-led community-based organizations in response to GBV.

Madam Chair,

“Inclusion” has become more important than ever in response to the pandemic. Japan commends the host countries for their efforts to include refugees in their national health systems and vaccinations plans. The international community must strengthen its efforts to close the enormous gaps in vaccination levels still existing between developed and developing countries. Japan has been cooperating with the COVAX facility and providing the cold chain equipment as “Last One Mile Support” to ensure equitable access to vaccines, and will continue to do so.

To ensure access to education by refugee children is crucially important not only as a

protection function but also as an important opportunity to nurture their potential. We benefited from several occasions to hear the stories of refugees who had received higher education and are now playing essential roles in various fields, including as health workers, in response to COVID-19. We recognize that the enrolment rate of refugees in education is still lower than host learners, and this is particularly evident in secondary and tertiary education. Japan welcomes UNHCR's initiatives and partnerships with a range of stakeholders to provide better learning environments for refugee and other vulnerable children. In this connection, I would like to mention that [ ] Syrian students will come to Japan to start studying at universities this year. JICA is currently working with UNHCR to extend the "Japanese Initiative for the future of Syrian Refugees (JISR)"—a project for accepting Syrian students for educational opportunities.

Japan was very pleased to welcome 35 refugee athletes to the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. We are confident that they inspired and gave hope to millions of displaced people. Japan shares UNHCR's view that sports provide opportunities to be included and protected, which equates to a chance to heal, develop and grow. We therefore appreciate UNHCR's initiative to promote sports programmes and partnerships with various sports entities.

Madam Chair,

We have about two months before the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM). Japan thanks UNHCR for having a series of preparatory briefings and stocktaking events. We are looking forward to the launch of the GCR indicator report and the subsequent roundtables, which will provide a good basis for discussion at the HLOM. Japan will actively engage in the HLOM and would like to make a contribution to achieving its three priorities.

Thank you.