

72nd Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (4–8 October 2021)
Statement by Ambassador OKANIWA Ken, Permanent Mission of Japan in Geneva

Thank you, Madam Chair,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan would like to pay tribute to the staff of UNHCR for their dedicated work under severe conditions. High Commissioner, we are also grateful for your strong leadership. Your firsthand observation through a number of missions always helps us understand the reality of humanitarian situations on the ground.

Japan is seriously concerned by the situation in Afghanistan and fully recognizes the enormity of the humanitarian needs of the Afghan people. Japan highly appreciates the recent visit by the High Commissioner, and recognizes the importance of UNHCR being engaged with the Taliban to conduct secure operations. We are very grateful to the efforts of the humanitarian workers who remain in the country to deliver assistance to the people in need in spite of the current turmoil.

Japan announced its intention to provide a total of USD 200 million for the Afghanistan situation this year, including USD 65 million in new assistance in such areas as shelter, health, WASH, food and education, through international organizations. As a member of the Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform, Japan will continue to fulfill its international humanitarian responsibilities in partnership with UNHCR.

Madam Chair,

While Afghanistan is the most prominent humanitarian crisis in the second half of this year, we should not forget other ongoing humanitarian situations. This year, Japan has provided emergency assistance for UNHCR's operations in Armenia and Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Myanmar. We have also provided two partnership grants for projects that benefit the refugees and displaced people, and the host communities in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Last month, we further decided to allocate JPY 100 million from our core contribution for UNHCR to support Colombia's efforts to provide temporary protection for Venezuelans. In response to COVID-19, Japan has been supporting the COVAX facility to close the gaps in vaccination, and will continue to do so.

(check against delivery)

We have about two months before the High-Level Official Meeting (HLOM). The HLOM will be a milestone to enhance the momentum for the next Global Refugee Forum (GRF) as well as to take stock of the implementation of pledges. Japan will actively engage in the HLOM, including in a series of preparatory events, and contribute to achieving its three priorities.

Madam Chair,

Japan welcomes the steady progress of the Business Transformation Programme (BTP), including the introduction of COMPASS and the new budget framework. We thank UNHCR for sharing information about the process and request the organization to continue to keep us updated in a timely manner.

Japan places great emphasis on integrity and risk management. We highly appreciate the sustained efforts by UNHCR to improve these mechanisms. We encourage UNHCR to improve its integrity and risk maturity, both internally and also in its work with implementing partners.

Madam Chair,

Finally, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the High Commissioner for his visit to Japan on the occasion of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in July. High Commissioner, thanks to your cooperation and that of UNHCR, especially the Tokyo office, the visit was a success despite the strict COVID-related restrictions. We will follow up on the outcomes of your visit and explore further cooperation going forward.

Japan was very proud to welcome 35 refugee athletes to the Tokyo Games. We commend them for competing with world-class athletes as well as for helping to draw international attention to the 82 million people displaced globally.

Thank you.