



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-fourth session

Item 116 (c) of the preliminary list\*\*

### **Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of members of the Human Rights Council**

#### **Note verbale dated 11 January 2019 from the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly and has the honour to inform the latter that the Government of Japan has decided to present its candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2020–2022 at the elections to be held in New York 2019. The Permanent Mission of Japan would be grateful if the candidacy of Japan could be included in the final document to be produced for the forthcoming elections and would also appreciate it if it could be circulated among the Member States.

Japan looks forward to playing an active role in concert with other States in the Human Rights Council, which is responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard, the Government of Japan has the honour to transmit herewith a set of written pledges and commitments for the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#) (see annex).

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 9 July 2019.

\*\* [A/74/50](#).



## **Annex to the note verbale dated 11 January 2019 from the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

### **Candidature of Japan to the Human Rights Council, 2020–2022**

#### **Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/251](#)**

#### **I. Japan's human rights policies**

1. Upholding the highest standards of human rights, enshrined and guaranteed in its Constitution, Japan has consolidated its democratic political system and developed policies for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as universal values. Japan firmly believes that the promotion and protection of all human rights is a legitimate interest of the international community. Therefore, grave violations of human rights need to be addressed in cooperation with the international community. Japan also affirms that the human rights of all people should be respected, regardless of their countries' cultures, traditions, political and economic systems and levels of socioeconomic development, even if there are differences in their processes and speed of achievement with regard to human rights protection. Protecting human rights is the most fundamental responsibility of any nation.

2. Based on its commitment to dialogue and cooperation, Japan has been steering efforts to resolve human rights issues of concern to the international community and to improve human rights situations through both international forums, such as the United Nations, and bilateral dialogues. In addition, Japan has been extending necessary and feasible cooperation through technical assistance. Japan is committed to continuing to actively contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world in collaboration with the international community, including the United Nations and civil society.

#### **II. International commitments and pledges for the promotion and protection of human rights**

##### **Conclusion of international human rights instruments and their continued sincere implementation**

3. Japan has concluded the following international human rights instruments and is committed to their sincere and appropriate implementation, including the submission of periodic reports and dialogue with each treaty body:

- (a) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1979);
- (b) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1979);
- (c) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1985);
- (d) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1994);
- (e) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1995);
- (f) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1999);

(g) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2009);

(h) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2014).

4. Japan has also concluded and faithfully observed the Geneva Conventions and the Protocols Additional thereto, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Furthermore, in 2017, Japan concluded the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in order to deal with transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons.

5. Japan will continue to appropriately follow up on the recommendations it has received from each treaty body in order to bolster its cooperation with each body and its commitments pertaining to the implementation of each instrument.

6. In addition, Japan recognizes the importance of various activities undertaken by civil society. Based on that recognition, Japan holds meetings with public and non-governmental organizations, listens to their opinions and reflects them in its periodic reports. Japan attaches great importance to dialogues with civil society and will continue to hold them.

#### **Continuous contribution to and active participation in the Human Rights Council**

7. Japan has actively engaged in the activities of the Human Rights Council in order to improve the human rights situations of various countries and regions and find solutions to human rights issues. Japan served as a member of the Council from its establishment in 2006 until 2011, and again from 2013 to 2015. At present, Japan is serving a term from 2017 to 2019. During each period, Japan has actively contributed to the Council's discussions and to the adoption of key resolutions and has thereby shaped the opinion of the international community pertaining to human rights issues in the following ways:

(a) Together with the European Union, Japan has taken the lead in adopting the resolutions on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and is making efforts to raise international awareness in order to improve the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the abductions issue;

(b) Japan served as pen holder for the resolutions on the situation of human rights in Cambodia and has continuously supported the efforts of the Cambodian Government to improve the human rights situation on the ground;

(c) Japan led the adoption of the resolutions on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. In 2017, the Council adopted the resolution to appoint a Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, and Japan contributed to its unanimous adoption.

8. In addition, Japan has actively engaged in the Council's discussions pertaining to improving the human rights situation in Syria, enhancing the protection of vulnerable groups, such as women and children, addressing sexual violence in conflict and tackling violent extremism.

9. Japan also attaches great importance to meaningful and constructive dialogues with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the special procedures, to which it will continue to offer its cooperation.

10. Furthermore, Japan has actively contributed to the activities of the Council, including the universal periodic review. Japan takes the results of the universal periodic review process in November 2017 seriously and will work on follow-up actions, including the voluntary submission of interim follow-up documentation.

11. Japan has played an active role in discussions to improve the work and functioning of the international human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, in order to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness ahead of the review of the Council in 2021.

### **Continuous contribution to the work of the General Assembly and other forums**

12. Japan is actively advancing its efforts in various fields, such as women's empowerment, child protection, health and disaster risk reduction, while exercising its leadership in the work of the General Assembly and other forums in order to realize the concept of human security, in the following ways:

(a) Japan is leading discussions on the participation and protection of women. At the Group of Seven summit held at Ise-Shima in 2016, Japan raised themes pertaining to women in all relevant meetings, including the leaders' meeting, and agreed on the Group's guiding principles for building the capacity of women and girls and the women's initiative on developing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In 2018, Japan served as a champion State in the sector of women's leadership, empowerment, access and protection in crisis response, which is one of the flagship programming initiatives led by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), through which Japan is strengthening its collaboration with UN-Women. In addition, at the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Japan actively participated in the discussions on promoting the participation of women in rural areas in policy formulation and decision-making processes. Furthermore, since 2014, Japan has hosted the World Assembly for Women, inviting female leaders and male supporters who are active in various fields and provide support for women, from Japan and abroad. Japan has been making proposals towards the realization of "a society where all women shine" through these efforts;

(b) Japan is taking the initiative in efforts to end violence against children (target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals) as a board member and pathfinding country of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund and non-governmental organizations. In addition, Japan contributed 650 million Japanese yen to the humanitarian sector of the Fund to End Violence against Children, ahead of the rest of the world. Japan's contributions have been used for projects to protect children in conflicts in Nigeria and Uganda. Furthermore, Japan has been actively involved in the WeProtect Global Alliance to end child sexual exploitation online;

(c) Japan is strengthening health systems under the Basic Design for Peace and Health established in September 2015. Japan co-hosted the Universal Health Coverage Forum in December 2017 in Tokyo, together with the World Bank, World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund and other international organizations, and adopted the Tokyo declaration on universal health coverage as a commitment to accelerate efforts towards achieving universal health coverage by 2030. In addition, at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, in September 2017, Japan hosted a side event on the theme "Universal health coverage: achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through health for all", as a leading force for the universal health coverage movement. Japan will continue to actively engage in tackling health issues in the international community, including taking the initiative in the high-level meeting on universal health coverage to be held in 2019;

(d) By applying its accumulated knowledge and skills in cooperation with developing countries to help to train personnel and conduct research in the area of disaster risk reduction, Japan is collaborating with the United Nations, including through its support to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. Furthermore, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, an international guideline for disaster risk reduction, was adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, hosted by Japan in 2015, and the importance of investment in disaster risk reduction and the concept of how to “build back better”, proposed by Japan, were included in the guideline. In addition, Japan has been promoting public awareness activities all over the world in collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction since the General Assembly designated 5 November as World Tsunami Awareness Day in 2015, for which Japan, together with 141 countries, proposed the resolution. Japan will further actively contribute to the international community by utilizing its advanced knowledge and technology for disaster risk reduction;

(e) In addition to the above-mentioned actions, Japan will continue to contribute to the promotion of the Security Council’s agenda on the protection of civilians, in particular with regard to sexual violence in conflict, as well as children and armed conflict.

### **Development cooperation**

13. In February 2015, Japan established the Development Cooperation Charter. Setting the notion of human security as a guiding principle, the Development Cooperation Charter outlines Japan’s commitment to provide cooperation by protecting and enhancing the capabilities of each person, focusing in particular on vulnerable people, as a basic guideline. Based on this principle, Japan has been contributing to improving human rights situations through concrete efforts, including the following actions:

(a) Japan established the Sustainable Development Goals Promotion Headquarters, headed by the Prime Minister and comprising all Cabinet members, in May 2016, in order to accelerate efforts to achieve the Goals domestically, as well as in the area of international cooperation. At its 4th meeting in December 2017, the Sustainable Development Goals Promotion Headquarters raised the following three pillars: the promotion of Society 5.0 by both the public and private sectors; regional vitalization; and the empowerment of future generations and women. At the same time, it announced the 2018 Sustainable Development Goals Action Plan, which includes the Japanese Government’s major plans. In addition, the Headquarters approved the expanded 2018 Sustainable Development Goals Action Plan, embodying and expanding the contents of the previous plan, at its 5th meeting in June 2018. In the area of international cooperation, Japan announced at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017 that it would focus on issues pertaining to children and young generations and provide \$1 billion in assistance, mainly for education, health, disaster risk reduction and gender, by 2018. In 2019, Japan plans to host the follow-up meeting on the Goals in New York, the first summit-level meeting, as well as the Group of Twenty summit at Osaka and the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Japan. Japan intends to strengthen its efforts for achieving the Goals based on the principle of human security;

(b) In the area of gender, Japan announced the Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in May 2016 in order to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in developing countries. In addition, Japan announced a measure to provide training for around 5,000 female government officials and improve the learning environment for around 50,000 girls over three years from 2016. Furthermore, at the World Assembly for Women in December 2016,

Japan pledged financial cooperation of more than \$3 billion over three years until 2018 in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries. Japan has implemented these commitments;

(c) In the area of education, Japan is actively promoting educational cooperation to realize equitable, inclusive and quality learning and human resources development in the areas of industry, science and technology under the Learning Strategy for Peace and Growth, which outlines the Japanese Government's education cooperation policy. At the Group of Seven summit at Charlevoix, Canada, in June 2018, Japan committed to contribute \$200 million to quality education and human resources development for girls and women in developing countries;

(d) In 2016, Japan provided \$678 million of official development assistance in the field of health care and has actively engaged in the realization and continuation of universal health coverage. Japan will continue to promote universal health coverage in accordance with the leaders' declaration issued by the Group of Seven at Ise-Shima and adopted in May 2016 and the Tokyo declaration on universal health coverage approved in December 2017 for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) Japan has pledged to provide \$4 billion in total to disaster risk reduction and training for 40,000 government officials and local leaders to play a leading role in national efforts for disaster risk reduction and post-disaster efforts to build back better from 2015 to 2018 under the Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction announced at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015. Japan will continue to advance its efforts in order to promote international cooperation in the area of disaster risk reduction;

(f) In the area of persons with disabilities, Japan has contributed to promoting their social participation and to constructing barrier-free facilities;

(g) With regard to assistance to the governance sector, Japan is actively supporting legal systems development, police activities and democratization, including support for elections and capacity building of parliaments and the media;

(h) In the lead-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020, Japan has been sharing the value of sports and promoting the Olympic and Paralympic movements through the Sport for Tomorrow programme, which is an international contribution, together with the public and private sectors, to improve sport-related facilities, provide sport-related equipment, invite and dispatch coaches and athletes, implement technical cooperation, introduce Japanese culture and develop human resources. The programme is aimed at sharing the values of sports with more than 10 million people of all generations all over the world, including in developing countries, by 2020. Japan will continue to promote the programme to ensure the achievement of these goals (as at the end of March 2018, 6.64 million people in 202 countries and regions had been sharing the values of sports);

(i) Japan is actively collaborating with and contributing to the activities of relevant international organizations that lead the promotion and protection of human rights, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Japan will continue to support these international organizations.

#### **Promotion of bilateral dialogue**

14. Japan, recognizing the importance of dialogue and cooperation based upon the principles of mutual understanding and respect, has held regular bilateral dialogues

and consultations on human rights with the European Union and countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia and Iran. Japan will continue to hold interactive dialogues on human rights with various countries and make efforts to contribute to each country's efforts to solve human rights issues through the sharing of best practices.

### **III. Promoting human rights in Japan**

15. Japan is fulfilling the obligations stipulated in the international human rights instruments to which it is a party. All of its relevant ministries and agencies have engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights in various fields. Japan will continue to hold dialogues with civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to promote and protect the human rights of all people, including the young and the elderly, women and men, persons with disabilities and children, and to implement the policies and measures to realize a society where all people can exercise their abilities and find their lives worth living.

#### **Gender equality**

16. Japan recognizes realizing “a society where all women shine” as one of the most important issues. Japan has formulated the Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality and the Intensive Policy to Accelerate the Empowerment of Women and has enforced the Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace. Japan will continue to promote a range of actions, including the active recruitment and promotion of women, the steady development of female human resources, the reform of labour practices predicated on male-oriented working styles and the eradication of violence against women.

#### **Rights of children**

17. In addition to existing measures to eliminate child pornography, Japan formulated the Basic Plan on Measures against Child Sexual Exploitation in 2017, which is a national basic plan expanding coverage to all aspects of the sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, in order to eliminate child sexual exploitation. Japan has promoted various measures for raising public awareness, protecting and supporting victimized children and strengthening crackdowns in accordance with the plan. Furthermore, in the same year, Japan revised the Penal Code and strengthened the penal provisions against sexual offenses, such as establishing the crime of sexual intercourse by a person having custody of a person under the age of 18. Through these measures, Japan deals with sexual offenses more strictly than before.

#### **Rights of persons with disabilities**

18. Japan has implemented various measures since its conclusion of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014. Japan enforced the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities in 2016 and has been implementing wide-ranging measures, including the prohibition of unfair discriminatory treatment of persons with disabilities and the provision of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities. Japan intends to continue to promote measures for persons with disabilities in order to realize an inclusive society.

#### **Efforts relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020**

19. Japan will host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo in 2020. Japan has pledged to make the Games an opportunity to foster an inclusive society based on diversity and harmony where all kinds of differences are recognized, including race,

gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities and other types of status. Japan also pledged to prepare and manage the Games in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. This is the first time that the Olympic and Paralympic Games are being organized under the Guiding Principles. In addition, the organizing committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo has formulated the sustainable sourcing code. By respecting international agreements and codes of conduct for sustainability, the code defines standards and operating procedures to ensure procurement in which sustainability issues, such as the environment, human rights and labour, are taken into consideration. Based on the code, suppliers will be required to comply with and respect international human rights standards, eliminate discrimination and harassment, prohibit the violation of local residents' rights and respect the rights of women, persons with disabilities, children and social minorities.

#### **Business and human rights**

20. Japan commits to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Through the steady implementation of the Guiding Principles, Japan seeks to promote and protect human rights in the context of business. In that regard, Japan has been formulating a national action plan on business and human rights as one of the main measures for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Japan continues to proceed with the formulation process through dialogue with various stakeholders. Japan is committed to encouraging responsible business conduct by steadily implementing the measures of the plan.

#### **Combating trafficking in persons**

21. Based on its 2014 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Japan promotes prevention, eradication and proper victim protection concerning trafficking in persons by strengthening cooperation with relevant foreign authorities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as well as by working closely with domestic organizations.

#### **Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people**

22. Japan enforced the Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender Status for Persons with Gender Identity Disorder in 2004 and then revised it in 2008 so as to relax the conditions necessary to change gender status. In addition, domestic human rights bodies have been providing counselling on a wide range of human rights issues, including discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, and conducting various awareness-raising activities to ensure that the rights of sexual minorities are respected. Japan will continue to promote these efforts in order to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

#### **Combating hate speech**

23. Japan enforced the Act on the Promotion of Efforts to Eliminate Unfair Discriminatory Speech and Behaviour against Persons Originating from Outside Japan in 2016 in order to eliminate unfair discriminatory speech and behaviour that unilaterally excludes people of specific ethnicities or nationalities. Japan intends to continue to engage in awareness-raising activities, the development of consultation platforms and efforts to improve the convenience of human rights consultations in foreign languages.

#### **Support for Ainu and Buraku people**

24. Japan will continue to promote comprehensive and effective policy measures for the Ainu people, taking their views into consideration, through various channels,



including the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion. In addition, Japan has enhanced the counselling platform, provided education and raised awareness to facilitate the elimination of discrimination related to Dowry issues (Buraku discrimination) based on the Act on the Promotion of the Elimination of Buraku Discrimination, which came into force in 2016.

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