

**Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: War, its lessons, and the search for a permanent peace, 29th January 2014, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Umemoto, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations*

I am grateful, Mr. President, that you have chosen a topic that touches upon a fundamental aspect of international peace and security. It also prompts our intellectual and academic curiosity.

The current situations in Syria, South Sudan and the Central African Republic are a clear indication of the crucial importance of national reconciliation to the achievement of permanent peace. As shown in the aforementioned cases, the situation on the ground in each country is different, requiring deep understanding of all the characteristics particular to each case so that we should deliberate on a case by case basis. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

The reality of today's world shows that reconciliation is not an easy task. I therefore believe that it would not be practical to discuss the issue in the abstract. In dealing with such an important issue, we need the wisdom of all Member States, and the Security Council, with only 15 members, may not be the best place. What the United Nations and the international community can do in practical and concrete terms to build an environment that encourages reconciliation should be something that the whole membership should address.

Japan has consistently followed the path of a peace-loving nation since the end of the Second World War. During a certain period in the past, Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly those of Asian nations. The Government of Japan, squarely facing those historical facts, has expressed its feelings of deep remorse and sincere mourning for all victims of the Second World War, both at home and abroad, and voiced its heartfelt apology. The entire position outlined by previous Administrations is maintained by the current Cabinet. Peace, democracy and human rights constitute an important part of the Japanese people's identity. Since the end of the Second World War, Japan has continued to pursue the path of a peaceful country and it will never change from that course. That point has been highlighted in the national security strategy that was approved by Cabinet decision in December 2013. It is therefore a pity that specific issues involving Japan and some neighbouring countries have been raised recently and during today's open debate. Japan does not believe that such actions are helpful in reducing tensions and enhancing stability in the region. Although Japan doubts that the Security Council is the most appropriate forum for dealing with those specific issues, let me clarify our positions on the three issues that were raised by some delegations today.

First, with regard to the Yasukuni Shrine, the Shrine is home to approximately 2.5 million souls who, regardless of their rank, social standing or nationality, made the ultimate sacrifice for their nation, not just in the Second World War but also during domestic turmoil and other wars since 1853. In the statement entitled "Pledge for everlasting peace", which Prime Minister Abe issued upon his visit to the Shrine, he underlined that the purpose of his visit was to renew the pledge that Japan shall never again wage war. It was by no means to pay homage to Class A war criminals or to praise militarism.

Secondly, we are deeply pained to think of the comfort women who experienced immeasurable pain and suffering. Japan has extended its sincere apologies and remorse to all those women on various occasions. We established the Asian Women's Fund in the 1990s to offer atonement to former comfort women. At this juncture, Japan's position is that this issue should not be politicized or be turned into a diplomatic issue. Throughout history, women's dignity and basic human rights have often been infringed upon during the many wars of the past. The Government of Japan attaches paramount importance to women's dignity and basic human rights and is committed to doing its

utmost to ensure that the twenty-first century is free from further such violations.

Thirdly, Japan has recently revised the commentary of the courses of study for junior high school and high school, solely from an educational point of view. We have done so because, like other countries, Japan also considers it natural to teach its own children about the country's territory. Japan has been manifesting its remorse regarding the war through concrete actions. Japan wishes to build a future-oriented and cooperative relationship with Asian nations, especially China and the Republic of Korea. Prime Minister Abe has stated that he wishes to build friendship with China and the Republic of Korea based on respect, and that he would strongly welcome direct dialogue with leaders from China and the Republic of Korea.

As a country that upholds such universal values as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law, Japan has actively supported efforts towards democracy and national reconciliation in different countries, including those of Asia. One such action is Japan's support for democratization, reconciliation and economic development in Myanmar. Another important case is Sri Lanka, where Japan has actively engaged in national reconciliation and establishing lasting peace.

Another project is the initiative called Corridor for Peace and Prosperity, which was launched in July 2006. This is an initiative that is aimed at contributing to creating a viable Palestinian economy by promoting economic development in the Jordan valley in cooperation with Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians. Furthermore, during the recent second Geneva Conference on Syria, Japan announced its plan to extend additional assistance worth \$120 million in total to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria.

Those are concrete recent actions that Japan has taken to support democratization and national reconciliation. Japan will continue to be a peace-loving nation and contribute even more proactively to securing the peace, stability and prosperity of the international community, as a proactive contributor to peace and on the basis of the principle of international cooperation.

Let me finish my remarks by quoting Mr. Nelson Mandela, former President of the Republic of South Africa. Madiba said that reconciliation means working together with your enemy. What the international community and the United Nations should do is prepare the ground for such reconciliation. Japan stands ready to continue to proactively contribute to such endeavours together with the international community and the United Nations.