



**Statement by Mr. Shigeru Umetsu, Deputy Permanent Representative**

**Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament**

**Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament**

**8 August 2023**

**“A New Agenda for Peace”**

Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by thanking you for convening today’s plenary on the “New Agenda for Peace,” which is relevant and timely. Thank you also to Ms. Régimbal, Chief of Service of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs Geneva Office, for her presentation about the “Our Common Agenda, Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace.” We welcome this Policy Brief, which contains relevant recommendations, and commend the efforts of the UN for the vision of new multilateralism. Today, my delegation would like to share with the Conference our comments on the Policy Brief from the perspective of arms control and disarmament.

We believe that the UN can play a meaningful role in responding to existential threats to humanity as a whole, facilitating international solidarity on cross-cutting issues. In this sense, we think that it is appropriate and relevant for the Policy Brief to include topics such as nuclear weapons, bio-risks, AI, and conventional weapons.

The “New Agenda for Peace” underpins the vision of new multilateralism by comprehensively building on past achievements. This is especially important in the area of nuclear disarmament. We should reaffirm, in particular, the importance of continuing the record of non-use of nuclear weapons, as well as the importance of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and the three principles of nuclear disarmament, namely, transparency, verification, and irreversibility. In this regard, we welcome that the Policy Brief recommends that States possessing nuclear weapons commit to never use them.

Mr. President,

Small arms and light weapons remain the source of grave insecurity in both conflict and non-conflict situations as well as the leading cause of violent deaths around the globe. Furthermore, the use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions continues to increase cases of civilian harms and casualties. Japan welcomes Action 7 of the Policy Belief and its human-centered approach in disarmament. Addressing various challenges in the area of conventional weapons is a pressing issue which is also related to achieving the SDGs. We need to redouble our efforts to ensure implementation of the existing international instruments and their further universalization. Japan appreciates the leading role of the Office for Disarmament Affairs so far and looks to UNODA for help facilitating further progress in this regard.

Mr. President,

Now, please allow me to touch upon issues in the emerging domains such as outer space, lethal autonomous weapons systems, and bio-risks.

First, regarding outer space, we can support the basic direction of the recommendations presented by the Policy Brief. We would like to emphasize the value of developing international norms, rules, and principles in this area. In order to agilely address the rapid technological changes related to outer space, it will be effective to address these newly emerging issues by forging political arrangements or commitments, as they tend to be more flexible and more adaptable to changing circumstances compared to legally binding instruments. Moreover, the process of formulating and accumulating common recognition on norms, rules and principles can eventually lead to the formulation of legally binding instruments in the future.

Second, Japan believes that the military use of AI should be responsible, transparent and based on international law. Based on this basic position, Japan will continue to actively and constructively participate in international rule-making and contribute to discussions in order to clarify the normative and operational framework pertaining to lethal autonomous weapon systems. Japan believes that forming rules by consensus in the CCW, a disarmament framework in which 126 countries and regions, including key stakeholders, participate, is essential to ensure the effectiveness of such rules. This is why Japan strongly

supports the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS, which successfully adopted a report containing substantive progress last May. Japan subscribes to an incremental approach and strongly hopes that the Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the CCW will adopt an adequate new mandate so that the GGE can build upon this year's valuable progress next year.

Third, regarding the issue of addressing biorisks, we share the understanding of the current situation and support the basic direction of the recommendations presented by the Policy Brief. As for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), which is of particular importance to my delegation, the 9<sup>th</sup> Review Conference established the Working Group to identify measures and to make recommendations to strengthen the BWC. The Working Group began substantive work this week and Japan will actively participate in the discussions. How to deal with biorisks within the BWC framework should be one of the most important issues for discussion at the Working Group. There are many other relevant international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), which also deal with biorisks. Therefore, we also need to identify effective means for them to coordinate with each other so that we can avoid duplications and promote synergies among them. Japan looks to the strong leadership of the United Nations in this regard.

Mr. President,

Finally, let me address the issue of building a stronger collective security machinery. The global framework of arms control and disarmament is structured in a systematic manner. All or part of the five kinds of measures, namely, (1) norms, (2) review process of implementation of the norms, (3) verification process of implementation of the norms, (4) dispute settlement process in the wake of non-compliance cases, and (5) enforcement and counter-measures vis-à-vis non-compliance cases, have been established for respective types of weapons in question. The weakest part of the disarmament system as a whole is the response to non-compliance cases, which largely depends on the function of the UN Security Council. Therefore, we echo the recommendations presented in the “New Agenda for Peace”. Reform of the Security Council is an urgent matter. We should strengthen the functions of the UN General Assembly as bulwark of multilateralism to fill the gap when the UN Security Council is unable to function for maintenance of the international peace and security including enforcement and counter-measures vis-à-vis non-compliance cases in the area of arms control and disarmament.

Lastly, while the Policy Brief touches upon the establishment of an intergovernmental process regarding a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, my delegation would like to flag that we would need careful consideration on when would be the best timing to convene the next special session, especially taking into account the overall international security

environment which would have significant influence on whether we can achieve productive and consensus-based outcomes.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind attention.

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