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STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. SUMIO TARUI
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TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

MEETING OF THE GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS
OF THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON PROHIBITIONS
OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS
WHICH MAY BE DEEMED TO BE EXCESSIVELY INJURIOUS OR TO HAVE
INDISCRIMINATE EFFECTS

Geneva, 14 January 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The Japanese delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the Chairmanship and assures you of our full support and cooperation to make this first meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts both meaningful and successful.

We welcome the mandate adopted in the last Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to negotiate a proposal to address urgently the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, while striking a balance between military and humanitarian considerations.

The involvement of the major countries that possess or produce cluster munitions is indispensable for effectively addressing the humanitarian concerns posed by cluster munitions. For this and other reasons, Japan has supported the CCW as the most effective framework.

Mr. Chairman,

It is now incumbent upon us to translate last November's mandate into concrete actions. I am convinced that a strong commitment to the CCW is shared by the distinguished delegates gathered in this room. We have been given an opportunity to demonstrate our will to further strengthen the regime and spirit of the CCW.

Japan supports the creation of an international agreement in the form of a new CCW Protocol to address the humanitarian concerns posed by cluster munitions. We have to strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and security requirements; this will maximize the effectiveness of our response in reality.

Unexploded sub-munitions of cluster munitions have caused serious humanitarian concerns, which last long after the end of the conflict. We must and we can tackle this challenge. The Japanese delegation is looking forward to engaging in discussions on various ways to minimize the number and area of unexploded sub-munitions.

For example, cluster munitions whose sub-munitions are equipped with self-destruction, self-neutralization, or self-deactivating mechanisms can reduce the number of unexploded sub-munitions. Cluster munitions whose failure rate is below a certain level, or which contain only a limited quantity of sub-munitions can also reduce the number of unexploded sub-munitions. Cluster munitions equipped with guidance system can reduce the areas where unexploded sub-munitions might be dispersed, making their clearance easier.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan also supports the clear stipulation of relevant international humanitarian law principles in the new Protocol.

We support the inclusion of other measures to respond to humanitarian concerns. For example, we are supportive of establishing an Article specifically addressing the need for victim assistance. We should not forget an important role of international cooperation and assistance. Those countries, in a position to do so, should, when feasible, provide assistance to those who are in need. Japan has been providing assistance for clearing unexploded munitions, including cluster munitions, in Lebanon, Afghanistan and other places.

Mr. Chairman,

The Japanese delegation is prepared to offer more detailed views on the specific agenda in the course of this meeting. We are ready to begin. We urge our fellow delegates to engage in substantial and constructive discussions and initiate our actions.

Thank you.