Statement by H.E. Mr. Joe NAKANO, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

On the Occasion of High-Level Segment at the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty

2 July, 2012
Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to first congratulate you on your appointment as President of this Conference. Your leadership is indispensable for us in concluding this long journey.

Before expressing Japan’s view on an Arms Trade Treaty, I would like to touch upon the pressing issue of international concern: the ongoing situation in Syria. Japan has strongly supported the role the Secretary-General played in this issue, and continues to be concerned about the turmoil in the country. I reiterate Japan’s strong desire for the immediate cessation of violence and the hope that efforts made by Mr. Annan would bear results.

Mr. President,

This year marks a critical moment in the history of conventional arms. For the past two decades, Japan has continuously contributed to the rule-making process on conventional arms, currently represented by the UN Register for Conventional Arms and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. In Asia, where we have been witnessing a constant increase of arms trade, Japan has provided assistance to neighbouring countries to strengthen their capacity in the area of export control.

However, we remain unsatisfied with our achievements. Something was obviously missing. We had to find a critical piece of the puzzle. That is why we co-sponsored the UN General Assembly Resolution in 2006, which started the process of establishing a legally-binding instrument that, for the first time, duly regulates the international transfer of conventional arms.

Now the time has come to realize what we have started six years ago. The month we are going to spend here in New York is not just another month in time, but rather a historical moment. We have been given this opportunity to once and for all create an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

The unregulated transfer of arms has caused regional instabilities and serious
violations of human rights, led to terrorism and created many other evils. We must
not leave the arms trade in darkness. We have now reached the stage of taking the
first step in tackling this persistent threat. It is our duty to find the light that can lead
us away from this total darkness.

Mr. President,

I would like to express our basic views on the elements of an ATT in a few simple yet
crucial words: clarity, objectivity, strength and transparency.

First of all, an ATT should aim to establish the highest possible common international
standards that articulate clarity and objectivity as much as possible.

We reaffirm that, in the treaty, states shall not authorize a transfer of conventional
arms that go against any international legal obligations. Similarly, there must be
strong criteria in order to assess the potential risk an arms transfer could cause. These
criteria will contribute to both the adequate authorization and accountability of each
state for its arms transactions.

In this regard, Japan confirms that this treaty should not restrict the legal trade in
conventional arms for self-defense and other security purposes.

Secondly, the treaty should have the broadest possible scope of arms. In addition to
the seven categories described in the UN Register for Conventional Arms, and small
arms and light weapons and ammunition, we should also explore including parts or
components, and technology and equipment, taking into account their ability to cause
conflict. Japan believes that the scope of activities should also include export, import,
transit, trans-shipment and brokering.

Thirdly, the treaty should be implemented at the national level. National export
control lists, export licensing systems, and preventive measures against illicit
diversion are critical elements. At the same time, we need a certain degree of
flexibility in the control of some activities, particularly transit and brokering, in
accordance with the existing circumstances and systems in each state.

Fourthly, I stress that the reporting mechanism should play a key role in enhancing
transparency. The submission of national reports should be mandatory and their
contents made public. Coordination with existing frameworks should be considered
to avoid “reporting fatigue”.

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Fifthly, I would like to point out the importance of international cooperation and assistance in facilitating the treaty’s implementation, especially in the field of export and import control.

Mr. President,

We are now at a historic crossroad. The failure is not an option for us. By the end of this conference, we must realize a strong and universal ATT. This is why we have gathered here today. This is what we must show to the entire world after a six-year struggle.

We are grateful for all your efforts in successfully guiding us to the Conference today. Japan has voluntarily introduced a strict arms export control system in our country. Based upon these experiences, I would like to reiterate my delegation’s full commitment to actively participate in the negotiations and our utmost support towards the work of the President. I would also like to call upon all the delegations to work together to reach our paramount goals.

Finally, let us share the three values.

Passion from all the delegations,
Hope for all the victims,
Victory for everyone.

I thank you, Mr. President.