

Remarks by Mr. MARUYAMA Norio, Ambassador of Japan  
On the occasion of the Annual & Africa Month Celebration  
“Levers for Building the Africa we Want”  
hosted by World Women Leading Change (WWLC)

Her Royal Highness Princess Debbie Dineo Raphuti, World Women Leading Change Africa President,

Honourable Ms. Candith Mashego-Dlamini, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation,

Excellencies, Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you World Women Leading Change Africa for inviting me to join the Africa Month Celebration.

As it is the first time for me to join this celebration, I would like to take this opportunity to share with all participants today how Japan is contributing to the world for enhancing women’s empowerment and gender equality, at the time COVID-19 revealed the difficulties that are being faced by economically and socially vulnerable people, especially women and girls.

Indeed the pandemic exposed the gender inequality that existed long before the spread of the virus, and the continuation of the pandemic will likely only further exacerbate these inequality gaps.

But at the same time, we can re-evaluate our usual ways of thinking and taking action, turning this crisis into an opportunity for improvement.

This is the reason why I think that there is space for the international community to work together to build a better society by putting women and girls at the center of efforts to recover from COVID-19.

We should cooperate in advocating for the importance of gender equality in the international community, sharing an idea to build a society that accommodates and reflects the voices of women in all areas and fields.

Her Royal Highness, Honorable Deputy Minister, Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan is against any form of gender-based violence. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, gender-based violence has become an even more severe problem. Japan is determined to cooperate with other like-minded countries to eradicate gender-based violence

In March this year, in the framework of Gender Equality Forum, (a civil society-centered global gathering for gender equality convened by UN Women), the Government of Japan decided to participate in the Action Coalitions, as a member in the theme of Gender-Based Violence.

We have to protect women who became victims of violence in particular in countries affected by conflicts. Japan provides a wide variety of assistance in collaboration with international organizations.

To protect women and support victims of violence in those countries, we need to strengthen the rule of law, we need to strengthen police, military and judicial capabilities to prevent sexual violence in conflict. We need to promote economic empowerment of women, we need to support women's participation in the national reconciliation and peace processes.

Japan supports the efforts initiated by UN Women to promote peace, security and humanitarian assistance in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Japan has contributed 8.8 million US dollars since 2018.

Japan supports the activities of the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Team was created by the UN Security Resolution (1888) of 2009 to assist national authorities in strengthening the rule of law, with the aim of ensuring criminal accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence. Since 2014 Japan have contributed 9.5 million US dollars for projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Iraq.

Those countries affected by conflict need assistance to address impunity in order to prevent and deter future violations.

The Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence was established by Dr. Denis Mukwege and Goodwill Ambassador Nadia Murad,

Nobel Peace Prize laureates of 2018. This year, Japan has contributed two million euros to this Fund.

We have to prevent women and girls becoming victims of human trafficking. Japan supports the IOM (International Organization for Migration) programme on efforts towards fighting against human trafficking. The support of the Government of Japan between 2018-2020 (1 million USD) through IOM, has enabled vulnerable young girls and female adults to be aware of the risk of human trafficking and provide life-saving information on how to prevent becoming a victim of human trafficking and how to protect the potential victims of human trafficking.

Currently, the programme “Socio-Economic Reintegration of Returnees and other vulnerable households in migration affected areas severely impacted by COVID-19 pandemic” is being conducted in a community in the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Her Royal Highness, Honorable Deputy Minister,  
Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japan advocates the importance of promoting women's empowerment to the world. At the G20 Osaka Summit, which Japan presided over in 2019, the importance of women's role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding was clearly stated in the G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration.

Furthermore, Japan has held the World Assembly for Women (WAW!) since 2014 to communicate, both at home and abroad, Japan's initiatives for promoting women's empowerment, and to provide an opportunity for discussions regarding various matters concerning women by top leaders from Japan and abroad who are active in pioneering politics, economy, and social fields.

The 5th WAW! was held in March 2019, side by side with the W20, one of the G20 engagement groups (groups composed of stakeholders from the international community that are independent of governments).

Her Royal Highness, Honorable Deputy Minister,  
Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish now to touch upon our recent efforts in South Africa. Japan has been

working in cooperation with UN Women to support women marginalized by the COVID-19 crisis in developing countries, based on a concept of human security in which all life and dignity should be respected.

This includes a programme in South Africa which provides women with training and advisory resources to promote entrepreneurship.

Japan has contributed 200,000 USD to the project "Promoting the Leadership, Access, Empowerment and Protection of Women and Girls in COVID-19 Response" implemented in South Africa by UN Women.

This project aims at providing women in economically vulnerable situations seriously affected by COVID-19 with empowerment training related to fields such as entrepreneurship, prevention from and response to sexual violence at community level.

Our contribution extends to skills development of youth and women, and job creation.

In cooperation with UNDP, the “Automotive Training and Re-Skilling in the Post-COVID Economic Recovery for Vulnerable Youth and Women in South Africa” will commence with 1.18 million USD.

Through this programme,

- institutional capacity of the TVETs will be strengthened to identify challenges and opportunities for vulnerable youth and women in the automotive sector in the COVID-19 context,
- provision of automotive and life-long skills of vulnerable women and youth will be strengthened to increase access to employment opportunities in the automotive industry, through increased technical capacity of TVET colleges, and
- a sustainable platform to link job seekers with job opportunities in the automotive sector will be established for trained women and youth, private sector, academic institutions and policymakers.

On a bilateral basis, our Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects addresses women’s health and empowerment.

Recent contributions through these projects include provision of facilities or

equipment such as:

- mobile clinic,
- ultrasound machine,
- ambulance,
- incubator,
- infant warmer,
- vehicle for mental counseling.

In 2019, we provided those equipment to clinics in Limpopo, Gauteng and Western Cape.

Her Royal Highness, Honorable Deputy Minister,  
Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

COVID-19 has reminded us of the harsh realities that many women and girls have to face on a global scale.

It is our goal that the support of Japan I mentioned simultaneously help women in difficulty to protect themselves from infectious diseases while also improving their livelihoods, thus contributing to the promotion of gender equality and women's economic empowerment around the world.

To make a better society with empowered women in the era of post-COVID-19, Japan is resolved to do its best by being a key player in the fight towards eradicating the challenges faced by women and girls.

Thank you.