Statement by H.E. Mr. Jun Yamazaki
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Annual Session of the Executive Board of UNICEF
Item 3: Annual Report of the Executive Director of UNICEF:
Progress and achievements against the medium-term strategic plan
18 June 2013

Mr. President,

I would like to thank the Executive Director, Mr. Anthony Lake, for his comprehensive and thoughtful statement on the annual report on UNICEF’s progress and achievements against the medium-term strategic plan.

Mr. President,

There are less than 1000 days left for the achievement of the MDGs. UNICEF has been engaged in various MDGs particularly MDG-2, -4, -6 and -7. Based on the mid-term review and the end-of-cycle review, UNICEF has accelerated its efforts to achieve the MDGs. Japan expects UNICEF to continue to fulfill these endeavors.

As for the UNICEF Strategic Plan for 2014-2017, a draft plan has been presented and discussions on it have started. Japan welcomes the fact that the direction of the next plan is coherent with the current strategic direction, and that the various challenges such as emphasizing equity and acceleration of the effort to achieve MDGs elucidated in the mid-term review from 2011 have been reflected. Discussions on the draft are expected to continue toward the second regular session of the executive board scheduled in September, and my delegation hopes to see further improvements on the draft plan. In particular, my delegation considers fostering coherence and synergies among UNICEF, its recipient countries and its development partners to be crucial for success of programmes and the promotion of efficiency and effectiveness.

Another issue that must be taken into account while finalizing the UNICEF
Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 is the importance of gender equality. My delegation appreciates the draft Strategic Plan, insofar as it highlights the mandate to achieve gender equality. Nevertheless the Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 that UNICEF intends to introduce is yet to be produced. It would be appreciated if UNICEF could show a clear strategy for the achievement of gender equality. We look forward to UNICEF’s more detailed narrative about gender equality in the next version of the strategic plan.

Mr. President,

While making the utmost effort to achieve the MDGs, we also need to consider the post-2015 development agenda. Japan has been actively contributing to efforts to set that agenda through such means as organizing the ‘Contact Group’ since 2011 as well as TICAD V to which I will return later. Furthermore, discussions on the post-2015 agenda are ongoing in various fora and occasions, which will serve as a good basis for the discussions among Member States. My delegation believes that the major challenges to be included in the new framework are equity and inclusiveness, universal health coverage (UHC), quality education, sustainability, disaster risk reduction, economic growth and job creation. Among these, UHC should be recognized in the future discussions as one of the major pillars for all health-related goals.

The ‘equity-based approach’ proposed by UNICEF means that UNICEF seeks to understand and address the root causes of inequity so that all children, particularly those who suffer the worst deprivations in society, can have access to education, health care, sanitation, clean water, protection and other services necessary for their survival without discrimination, bias or favouritism. The aim of the “equity-based approach” is identical to the aim of the human security approach. My delegation believes that we can save the poorest children through the empowerment of every individual using the human security approach. In this regard, Japan continues to expect UNICEF to implement human security effectively on the ground.

Furthermore, the promotion of UHC is closely related to the notion of human security, since access to basic health care services and affordable quality medicine is crucial for people to be free from want and free from fear. Human security provides a comprehensive approach that strengthens the protection and empowerment of people and communities. At the High-level Event on Human Security held at the United Nations on 8 May, the effectiveness and added value of human security on the ground
were highlighted and shared amongst the participants.

Mr. President,

Two weeks ago, Japan hosted the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in Japan together with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the African Union Commission (AUC). The conference saw the participation of representatives of 51 African countries together with representatives from many international organizations including UNICEF. The conference was a huge success. My delegation would like to thank all of those who attended the meeting, and, in particular, Mr. Lake for his presence and active participation both at TICAD V itself and at the Symposium on Human Security at that time. Health related issues, including reduced child mortality by preventing infectious diseases and malnutrition as well as promoting education are urgent challenges in African countries. These issues have been addressed in the context of “Creating an Inclusive Society for Growth” and we hope the outcome of TICAD V will contribute to development of Africa. We believe UNICEF has a unique role to play in ensuring children in Africa enjoy the benefits of development. We look forward to continuing to work with UNICEF on these critical agenda.

Thank you Mr. President.