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**Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and
their family members**

Written statement* submitted by the Nippon Foundation, a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.17-02259(E)



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Statement from The Nippon Foundation at the 18th session of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

The Nippon Foundation is a private, not-for-profit organization based in Japan that has been involved in leprosy work for almost five decades.

Leprosy became a curable disease in the middle of the 20th century and is now treated with multidrug therapy (MDT), a standardized regimen introduced from the early 1980s. The Nippon Foundation provided funding to distribute MDT free of charge worldwide from 1995 to 1999, contributing to a substantial reduction in the number of leprosy patients. The provision of free drugs has continued uninterrupted thanks to Novartis. Together with renewed efforts being made to break transmission of the disease, we believe that we are drawing nearer to a world without leprosy, although many challenges remain.

Some 16 million people have been cured of leprosy since the introduction of MDT, but leprosy is not yet a disease of the past. WHO data shows that around 200,000 new cases are being reported globally each year. Furthermore, in various parts of the world, people who have been treated for leprosy still face multiple forms of discrimination, including denial of access to work, education or community life—even after they have been cured. The stigma of the disease also touches their families.

The 2010 UN General Assembly resolution on elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members shone a light on this age-old disease and the discrimination and prejudice it engenders. We consider the resolution and the accompanying set of Principles and Guidelines drawn up by the Advisory Committee to represent a sea change in the fight against this discrimination. The Principles and Guidelines affirm the dignity of persons affected by leprosy and their entitlement to human rights. It is our firm belief that the Principles and Guidelines should be respected and implemented by all stakeholders, in particular, States.

We would like, therefore, to express our sincere appreciation to Mr. Imeru Tamrat for preparing this remarkable final report following two years of intensive investigations into the state of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy today and the extent to which the Principles and Guidelines have been implemented in countries that still see the disease. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the drafting group members, especially Mr. Kaoru Obata, Chair of the group, and Mr. Obiora Okafor, the former Chairperson of the Advisory Committee.

We support the final report's recommendation calling for the creation of a special procedure under the auspices of the Human Rights Council for the purpose of following up, monitoring and reporting on progress made and measures taken by States for the effective implementation of the Principles and Guidelines. In addition, we welcome the part that recommends the Human Rights Council to encourage the OHCHR to organize seminars, conferences and side-events on leprosy-related discrimination in cooperation with States and relevant international organizations, such as the WHO as well as concerned NGOs.

Despite medical progress against the disease, the age-old discrimination attached to leprosy still lingers. The Nippon Foundation is willing to join UN efforts to realize wider dissemination and effective implementation of the Principles and Guidelines. It is our belief that with full implementation of the Principles and Guidelines, the stigma and discrimination that stem from misconceptions about and ignorance of leprosy will finally be eliminated.
