



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives**

### **Statement submitted by New Japan Women’s Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## Statement

Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association, which has 150,000 members throughout Japan, has been working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights for women and children and solidarity of women around the world for peace.

With regard to the priority theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls", the Association presents herein its ideas on the setting of the post-2015 development agenda.

The post-2015 development agenda should be built on the achievements and shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals process and should shape a course towards a peaceful, just and sustainable world where human rights are guaranteed for all. The realization of such a world requires a fundamental transformation of policies based on gender and human rights perspectives in all political, economic and social spheres. The key to success is gender equality, rights and the empowerment of women. The new development agenda should include a stand-alone goal on gender equality, rights and the empowerment of women, including time frames, numerical targets and indicators. Gender equality should be integrated into all other goals as a cross-cutting issue.

### **Reduce military spending and relocate resources for human needs**

According to the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2013*, world military expenditure in 2012 is estimated to have been about \$1.76 trillion. Although the total is about 0.4 per cent lower than in 2011, it remains very high. At the opening of the general debate of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, held on the subject of the post-2015 development agenda the Secretary-General said, "At a time of pressing human need, spending on weapons remains absurdly high. Let us get our priorities right and invest in people instead of wasting billions on deadly weapons". Reductions in military spending will promote demilitarization and create enabling conditions for conflict prevention as well as peaceful coexistence based on trust and cooperation. The Association calls on Governments to redirect excessive military spending towards human needs, such as education, welfare, medical services and job creation, in accordance with Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Continuing sexual violence against women and girls and violations of their human rights in armed conflicts or by stationing troops constitute an obstacle to the promotion of gender equality and rights of women. Along with the reduction in military budgets, collective efforts are required for the resolution of such issues through dialogue and diplomacy, which can also prevent conflicts from arising and/or escalating.

In this regard, we welcome recent developments regarding the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which most States, backed by public opinion worldwide, are calling for a peaceful resolution of the problem and rejecting any militarized response to the use of chemical weapons. As a result, the Syrian Arab Republic has become a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also welcome the call for the banning of nuclear weapons and the attention to humanitarian consequences of their use, which is taking centre stage in the preparations for the 2015 Review

Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Association urges Governments to abide by international law, to strengthen their effort towards the prevention and resolution of conflicts through peaceful means, and to commit themselves to the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security and all follow-up resolutions adopted by the Council. Being women of the only country that has suffered from the effects of the use of nuclear weapons, and being women of a country with a Constitution with an article renouncing war, based on the remorse felt for its war of aggression, in which the country forced many women in neighbouring nations in Asia into sexual slavery, we are resolved to oppose the use of force in any circumstances and to act for the elimination of nuclear weapons and for ending impunity for sexual violence. We take this opportunity to call for the support of the international community for our efforts to bring justice to the victims of sexual slavery (also known as “comfort women”) by the Japanese military during the Second World War.

### **Shift to a sustainable economy and a sustainable energy policy**

Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has been halved over the past 13 years, but the world faces the common challenge of a widening gap between the rich and poor due to the worsening economic and employment situation and the spread of poverty among women and young people, which has become a serious concern. Japan, the world’s third-largest economy, is no exception. From February to April 2013, the New Japan Women’s Association conducted a survey on the living conditions of women 65 years of age and older, and on working women under 65. The result shows the harsh reality of their lives: 80 per cent of the respondents say it is impossible to make a living with the pension they receive, and 14 per cent of the respondents working full-time get paid 2 million yen or less a year (about 20,000 dollars). The study published by the National Institute on Population and Social Security Research at the end of 2011 revealed that the relative poverty rate among women aged 20 to 63 and living on their own was 32 per cent, among women aged 65 and older, 52 per cent, and among single mothers, 57 per cent. Women also make up 57 per cent of those living in poverty. In Japan, the number of workers in non-regular jobs has risen sharply, consisting of 38.2 per cent of the entire workforce. In the case of employed women, 57.5 per cent are non-regular workers. The wage gap between men and women remains high, with women working full-time earning 70 per cent of what their male counterparts receive. Combined with the continued cuts in Government spending on social services, inequality in wages makes it difficult for women to be economically independent and to live a stable life in their old age.

A shift to a more sustainable energy policy is also urgent. The disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in March 2011 is far from over. Fifty thousand people have left Fukushima, and more than 100,000 people are still not able to go back to their own houses. The leak of the radioactive water from the plant into the sea is now a global concern. The experience of Fukushima teaches us that once accidents happen at a nuclear power plant, peoples’ lives, as well as their means of livelihood, will be destroyed, and there will be serious damage to the environment. Damage compensation and clean-up costs are enormous. More importantly, we do not have technologies to safely dispose of nuclear waste, and

such waste will remain as a negative legacy for future generations. Facing the urgent need to deal with resource depletion, the alarming pace of climate change and environment degradation, collective and responsible efforts on the part of the international community are called for, including a radical shift towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

We call on the Governments to implement sustainability-first, rather than profit-first economic policies, to guarantee decent work and livelihoods for all and to protect the global environment.

**Elimination of discrimination and women's equal participation in decision-making**

Peace and sustainable development are possible when diverse voices are heard. The elimination of persistent gender-based discrimination and violence, and the promotion of women's equal participation in decision-making processes will bring about drastic changes in policies in all areas, including security. The average level of women's representation in parliament worldwide is 19 per cent. In Japan, the percentage is lower, at 7.9 per cent. In many countries, women are still excluded from taking part in decision-making that determines their own future. This is wrong and unacceptable. In order to accelerate the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, education based on human rights as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights is necessary. We urge Governments to commit themselves to the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and all other international agreements and resolutions regarding gender equality, rights and the advancement of women.

The year 2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Since the International Year of Women, in 1975, "Gender equality, development and peace" have been the goals of the United Nations and of women's movements throughout the world. Working to achieve these goals will lead us to a "world we want to live in". The New Japan Women's Association hopes that the discussions in the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will produce an outcome as a meaningful input from gender perspectives for the making of a new development framework.