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entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Since its founding in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association has been working all over Japan for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and for the promotion of gender equality, rights of women and children, and solidarity of women around the world for peace.

Key to Gender Equality Is to Eradicate Women's Poverty

Japan slipped to record-low 125th out of 146 countries in the global gender gap ranking in 2023, lagging far behind other nations in gender equality. Decisive causes for the country's poor performance are the delay in achieving equality in economy as shown by the remaining big gender wage gap, and the low representation of women in politics with female lawmakers holding only 10.2 per cent of the seats in the Lower House of the Diet.

Over the last three decades, Japan has become the only country without pay hike among the major industrialized nations, and for these ten years, the wages have kept declining. On the other hand, the consumption tax rate has been raised, greater burden has been imposed on the people with benefit cuts in all fields of social security including pension, medical and nursing care, and the education costs have remained high. All these have affected people's livelihoods, and currently unprecedented price surge is making the situation even worse.

In Japan, the number of working women hits a record high, but 60 per cent of them work in non-regular jobs and women get paid about 56 per cent of what men receive. Many of those work in nursing for the elderly, childcare and other care work are women, but their monthly wages are 50,000 Japanese yen (about 334 US dollars) less than the average wage for all businesses.

Low wages end up in low pension, which makes poverty a women's issue. Relative poverty rate of single women aged between 20 and 64 is 24.5 per cent, and that of single women aged 65 and over is as high as 46.1 per cent. Also, the underlying factor of sexual exploitation involving women in their teens and twenties are poverty and the lack of safety net.

The New Japan Women's Association pointed out that at the root of Japan's delay in progress towards gender equality are those politicians deeply tied with the war-glorifying and misogynist religious right and cult groups sharing the outdated family values based on gender roles have long been at the center of power. They have refused to recognize sexual diversity rights, reproductive health and rights, or to introduce the systems allowing the married couple to have different family names as well as the same sex marriage. They have promoted the neoliberal economic policies giving first priority to big businesses' profits. In order to eradicate poverty to advance gender equality, the Association has carried out the campaign, calling for pay raise and a drastic increase of public spending on education, social care and services to build a solid basis to enable every person to live on their own. In 2022, new gender pay gap disclosure rules were introduced, requiring many companies to report annually, which was the first step forward for redressing the gender pay gap in Japan.

The New Japan Women's Association has also been carrying forward the movement nationwide to provide food and livelihood support to women and children, while requesting municipalities to distribute free sanitary products at schools and public facilities, as well as to make school lunches and medical care for children free. Nearly half of Japan's municipalities are now offering free medical care for children up to age 18. We will continue to speak out and act calling on the government to drop

the massive military buildup with major tax increase policies, and to invest the money instead to support people's lives and livelihoods.

Reject Military Responses, Build Solidarity for Defending Lives, Livelihoods and Sustainable Future

Faced with Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and threat of use of nuclear weapons, the New Japan Women's Association members have continued to raise their voices throughout the country, saying, "Never to Use Nuclear Weapons", "Stop Nuclear Threats", "Uphold the Charter of the United Nations and International Law", and "Peaceful Settlement through Dialogues". Now in the Middle East, armed conflict between Israel and Hamas, an Islamic organization that controls the Gaza Strip, is escalating. Anxiety about another war is growing. The New Japan Women's Association urges both sides to immediately cease the use of force, abide by international law and exercise massive restraint. We also appeal to all relevant parties and the United Nations to make all diplomatic efforts to end the cycle of violence.

Failure to curb global warming has resulted in extreme heatwaves, wildfire, droughts, floods and other catastrophic weather events hitting all over the world. Climate crisis is more urgent than ever, and the very survival of humanity and the planet is at stake. This is not the time to waste money on war and arms buildup. Now is not the time to instigate division and confrontation, but to strengthen solidarity and cooperation to respond to crisis.

The Group of Seven Countries summit meeting held in Hiroshima in July 2023 declared from the atomic bombed city that nuclear deterrence was necessary, driving the Hibakusha, atomic bomb survivors, as well as all citizens both at home and abroad who earnestly wish for a world without nuclear weapons, to despair. The only way to eliminate the nuclear risk is to eliminate nuclear weapons. The New Japan Women's Association works in communities to make the facts about consequences of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki widely known, and collects signatures in support of the call for the government of Japan, the only country to have suffered the atomic bombing in wartime, to become party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and to lead peace diplomacy in the international arena making the best use of war-renouncing Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

On the occasion of the Sixty-eighth Session of Commission on the Status of Women, the New Japan Women's Association reiterates its call on all Member States to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, taking a big step forward towards a world free of nuclear weapons and war, and to work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.