

The Delegation of the Republic of Japan

Position Paper for the General Assembly 2

The topics before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) are as follows: Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). As a member state of the UN Japan strongly believes in the importance of ICTs for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development. Japan also considers DRR as an issue of particular significance to protect human lives. Therefore, Japan promotes all solutions and resolutions to the above-mentioned topics.

1. Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development

According to the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU), only 54% of the world's population used the internet in 2019, of whom the highest number was 72% of the African population, and still 52% on the Asian continent. In addition, the ITU says that 20-40 per cent of people in low-income countries do not have any mobile phone ownership and that the gender gap in mobile phone ownership is much wider. In consideration of *Measuring the Information Society (MIS) Report 2016* and 2017 "performance improvements are evident across the world; in particular, a number of middle-income developing countries are reaping the benefits of liberalised and more competitive ICT markets that are fostering innovation and ICT adoption across all sectors" - said by Brahim Sanou, Director Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT). Despite these encouraging developments, Japan sees a need in paying more attention to the world's least connected countries and bridge the existing digital divide in order to achieve the goals enshrined in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Therefore, Japan will work towards improving the accessibility of the internet and communication technologies and supports all proposals and resolutions on this issue.

Recognizing the importance of protecting communications technology and the internet for sustainable development worldwide, Japan supports GA resolutions A/RES/73/266 (2019) establishing a "Group of Governmental Experts on advancing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security" (GGE) and 75/240 (2020) establishing an "Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (OEWG). Access to safe internet in the country not only enables access to education worldwide, but also contributes to sustainable economic development by promoting industries and improving productivity. Japan strongly supports the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by GA resolution A/RES/70/1 (2015) for a more equitable and sustainable world. Furthermore, Japan welcomes the use of ICTs by the "Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators" (IAEG-SDGs) for monitoring the SDGs, which is enabled by GA resolution A/RES/71/313 (2017). ICT is an important factor for enabling persons with disabilities to access social life and education. Therefore, Japan supports the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* (2006) and its Optional Protocol contained in GA resolution A/RES/61/106 (2006). Not only do persons with disabilities lack adequate access to the internet to this day, similarly, women and girls in particular have less access to broadband internet and other knowledge-enhancing technologies. Japan is committed to improving internet access by supporting the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative and sees great potential for growth and prosperity through ICT, especially through the development of 5G services. Japan sees the advancement of communications technology as the economic and social future, and is therefore working towards this concept with the "Vision towards Beyond 5G" (2021). Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, physical flows of people have decreased dramatically, and ICTs provide a wide range of social solutions, such as telework, telemedicine, distance learning and autonomous operation of various devices.

Acknowledging the large digital differences between regions, there is a need for an all-encompassing ICT strategy that includes the countries of the Global South. Inaccessibility of ICTs further exacerbates global disparities in education and economy. Japan calls on the international community to work on a global ICT strategy to ensure the achievement of the SDGs. Japan sees as part of this strategy the exchange of knowledge and the provision and implementation of technical equipment in regions with little access to the internet, for example, mobile devices could be provided by the member states to increase technical equipment in these regions. The digital networking of all regions worldwide would promote economic and social development in these regions. Japan calls on all states to cooperate and is looking forward to working with the international community to advance the development and implementation of ICTs.

2.

Disaster Risk Reduction

According to the alarming numbers of the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), more than 1.35 million people were killed by natural hazards from 1996 to 2015, more than half died in earthquakes or tsunamis. In addition, many civilians are displaced from their homes, the majority of victims were those in low- and middle-income countries. These countries often have little warning systems. An advance warning of just 24 hours before a storm or heat wave could reduce the resulting damage by 30 per cent. DRR is important to the UN because it is linked to weak governance, growing poverty, biodiversity loss and collapsing ecosystems. In the words of António Guterres: "Left unaddressed, they aggravate the intensity and frequency of disasters and increase the need for humanitarian assistance." Due to its geographical characteristics, Japan has a long history of tackling various kinds of natural hazards, such as earthquakes, tsunamis and typhoons, floods. Japan is aware of the importance of reducing disasters and strives to share knowledge, build programs and provide assistance to countries in disaster areas around the world. Therefore, it supports all resolutions and efforts on this issue.

Japan strongly supports the GA resolution A/RES/54/219 (2000), which enabled the establishment of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Japan works in close partnership with UNISDR to promote a global disaster risk reduction agenda. An example of this cooperation is the three UN World Conferences on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Japan. The first conference was held in 1994 in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture. Since then, conferences were held in 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, and in 2015 in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, which suffered severe tsunami damage from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Japan strongly supports the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*, whose goal is to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures. The Sendai Framework is the successor instrument to the *Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*. Japan welcomes the decision to establish the 5th of November as World Tsunami Awareness Day within the *Sendai Framework*. In addition, for disaster prevention and preparedness, Japan supports the *UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness* (2005), which successfully supports the operationalisation of the *Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS)*. Japan considers disaster risk reduction as an important goal for a more stable and resilient world and therefore strongly welcomes GA resolution A/RES/69/284 (2015) to implement an open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology in the field of disaster risk reduction. In addition, A/RES/71/276 (2017) is an important booster in the full enforcement of the Sendai Framework and implements indicators to measure global progress in disaster loss reduction and a revision of terminology related to DRR reduction. In addition, the Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction, as Japan's own initiative, forms an extension of the *Sendai Framework*, through which Japan will train 85,000 people for disaster risk reduction including government officials, local leaders from 2019-2022. In addition, Japan will provide assistance to 5 million people in at-risk areas and has supported the development of disaster response plans in 80 countries. Japan strongly supports the 17 SDGs adopted by GA resolution A/RES/70/1 (2015), and considers the commitment to DRR as a commitment to the successful implementation of the SDGs.

Acknowledging the increasing risk of natural disasters due to global warming, Japan calls on the international community to pay special attention to DRR. Stability in disaster areas and the rapid rescue of lives can only be made possible with rapid crisis response plans and the full implementation of the Sendai Framework in all member states. In addition, Japan calls on the member states to provide human and financial support for the establishment of disaster response capacities. Furthermore, Japan would like to point out to member states that DRR is an integral part of social and economic development, and is essential if development is to be sustainable for the future. Japan is convinced that the successful implementation of the SDGs can only be achieved if "Development for Disaster Risk Reduction" is given more recognition, for example by reducing exposure and vulnerability of the poor to disasters or building resilient infrastructure. Furthermore, Japan calls on all Member States to continue the successful efforts that have already been initiated. Japan is committed to disaster reduction and calls on all states to work collaboratively on this matter.