Delegation from Japan

Position Paper for UN General Assembly Third Committee

The issues before the third General Assembly are: Addressing the Plight and Abuse of Child Soldiers In War and Conflicts, The Economic and Social Impacts of Poverty, and Policies and Programmes Involving Youth: Youth in the Global Economy. Japan recognizes these issues as fundamental to the development of the 21st-century global community. The eradication of poverty and establishment of secure localities are cornerstones of the Millennium Development Goals thus demanding the increased attention and action of the United Nations.

I. Addressing the Plight and Abuse of Child Soldiers in War and Conflict

Japan recognizes the use of children as soldiers to be one of the most severe threats to peace. According to Human Rights Watch, more than 500,000 children as young as age twelve have been recruited for armed conflict. Furthermore, this has occurred in 85 or more countries all the way down to the village-level. Often, recruitment is by abduction, thus demanding a strong international response to end this global plight.

Japan sets forth a zero-tolerance policy for the abuse of child soldiers. Our own action has solidified this position with programs and aid contributing significantly to the protection of children involved in armed conflict in areas like Acholiland, Northern Uganda. We have committed to providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, aiding refugees and the internally displaced, rebuilding basic infrastructure, and enabling the reconstruction of both social and economic structures in Northern Uganda. Japan provided two million dollars in 2007 to facilitate the protection of rights of affected children. This project is coordinated by UNICEF and conforms to Japan’s Framework on New Measures for Consolidation of Peace in Africa. The expansion of such programs to global efforts is the only acceptable action, and the only means with which to ensure a global solution.

Persistent efforts to increase global awareness must be of immediate attention to the international community. On February 19, 2008, Japan endorsed a weeklong exhibit titled “The Message from Children about War and Peace.” We encourage all member states to pursue similar action as a global call to action. Furthermore, Japan asserts that international standards for military conduct must be revised and mandated. For example, article 38 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child sets the minimum age for recruitment and participation in hostilities at 15. This age must be raised from 15 to 18, the minimum age of voluntary military service in Japan. Comprehensive action combating the global plight of child soldiers is the indeed the only acceptable solution.

II. Economic and Social Impacts of Poverty

The propagating affect of poverty in unstable areas must be of immediate attention to the international community. Specifically, the correlation between social conflict and economic instability should be the guiding force for developing 21st-century policy. It is evident that traditional solutions to global poverty are lacking; as such, innovative methods must be explored and effective ones implemented.

In 2000, Japan announced the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approval of the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR). The JFPR was created to fund innovative poverty projects with demonstrative community impact. Not only does JFPR work directly with projects, but it offers support to NGO’s recognized to be effective. Additionally, JFPR works with ADB Developing Member Countries (DMCs) to ensure that DMC economies will eventually function autonomously of foreign aid. Innovative methods and working to construct economies with the ultimate goal of autonomy will push the world past the de facto limits set by current policies. As such, Japan strongly recommends that the founding principles of the JFPR be extended to all global poverty initiatives.
Japan urges all Member States to move forward with economic policy. Specifically, we recommend the initiation of a Comprehensive Commission of Economists and Investors (CCEI) to create the framework of a global poverty program designed on the principles of the JFPR. First, the program must work with global and regional financial institutions concerned not just with economic theory, but with locale-specific and pragmatic solutions. Second, the long-term aim of the CCEI must be economic independence for all Member States. Not only will this alleviate the economic impacts of poverty, but it will lead to decreased social conflict.

**Policies and Programmes Involving Youth: Youth in the Global Economy**

Japan believes that youth are an overlooked demographic of the international community. While not of immediate consequence, overlooking the upcoming generation will be an untolerated failure of the international community. According to Youth in a Global Economy, A/RES/62/126, youth unemployment is at record-levels with youths being two to three times as likely to be unemployed; there must be zero-tolerance for such a disparity.

Education has driven the employment of the youth in Japan. Although Japan, like many other industrialized countries, suffered from an economic crisis in the 1970s, the degree of unemployment has been much less severe. Young people in Japan, as a result, have little trouble finding jobs after their education is completed. Educational policy is geared towards making education widely available and positions higher education in the country as the primary force for developing specific skill sets. As a result, many Japanese youth begin working when they have completed their senior year of high school or college. Japanese students are only required to attend school for nine years, but the number of students who do not continue their education is not significant enough to produce a disparity such as the aforementioned unemployed youths, a problem that plagues other industrialized countries. Japan’s culture highly values education, which encourages most students to complete higher education programs and as a result, helps Japanese youth become more employable.

Japan believes it necessary to examine pragmatic solutions to education and youth unemployment. More specifically, individualistic tendencies in the sphere of education must be recognized as inhibitory to the successful employment of youth at the global level. While Youth on the whole are more educated than before, many challenges remain to reducing their unemployment level. Focusing on the school to workforce transition, for example, will be essential to increasing employed youth. Indeed, persistent effort in assessing educational means and preparing youth for the workforce are issues that must receive immediate international consideration.