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**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”**

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.

Beijing + 30 – Women Taking Actions

Thirty years have passed since the Fourth World Conference on Women. In Japan, women have been carrying on the movement to achieve the goals of “Gender Equality, Development and Peace,” empowered by the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. These past years have been the struggle to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, and in Japan, frequent disasters have made the situation even more challenging, and more and more people are eyeing on how neoliberal policies with entrenched gender-based discrimination affecting the people's lives. At the same time, public awareness of gender equality has grown, and people's solidarity actions are moving the society.

Pressed by these actions, gender pay gap disclosure requirement for large companies was introduced, the Penal Code was revised to criminalize “nonconsensual sexual intercourse,” and the Supreme Court ruled that the now-defunct Eugenic Protection Law violated the country's constitution. Protests arise every time people of diverse sexualities come under attack, and long-buried sexual violence and harassment cases in various fields, including the entertainment agencies and the Self-Defense Forces have been exposed. Actions are spreading calling for their elimination.

Serious Lag in Achieving Gender Equality

Japan ranks 118th out of 146 countries in the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index, staying at the lowest among the Group of Seven industrialized nations. 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 about 10 percent of the seats in the Lower House of the Diet.

In these thirty years, the Japanese government has promoted, in accordance with the financial circle's strategy, a shift to privatization and non-regular employment, and adverse revision of labor laws as well as social security system including nursing care, medical services, and pension. This has resulted in Japan being the only major economy where income has failed to rise in real terms, while large companies are reaping unprecedented profits. As for women, more than half of the female employees work in non-regular employment and women earn about half of what men receive. These policies impede women's economic independence, exacerbating poverty especially among low-waged young women and single mothers as well as elderly women living alone on lower pension benefits.

It came to light that Japan's ruling party has maintained cozy relations with the right-wing and the cult group who glorify the war, take misogynistic views, try to impose the patriarchal family model on others, and refuse to introduce selective dual-surname system for married couples and same sex marriage. The revelation has brought strong criticism from the public.

Women Resolved to Block the Path to War

As the government pushes for reinforcement of the military alliance with the United States and massive military buildup, heinous crimes to violate women's human rights occur repeatedly. On September 4, 1995, when the Beijing Conference was taking place, a school girl was raped by U.S. military servicemen in Okinawa, Japan. The incident sparked massive protests not only in Okinawa but nationwide. People became vocal calling for the revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement to bring the perpetrator to justice according to Japan's national law, and they also demand reduction of U.S. military bases. Faced with mounting protests, the governments of Japan and the United States agreed on establishing the notification procedures for incidents and accidents involving U.S. military personnel. However, in June 2024 it was revealed that the government concealed the sexual assault committed by a U.S. soldier in breach of the reporting procedures. Criticism is growing towards the government for placing the military alliance with the United States above the lives and human rights of women and girls.

Japan's military budget soars to a new record high, and to secure the source of revenue for purchasing offensive weapons and for developing, exporting and producing next-generation fighter planes, budget for people's livelihood, welfare and education is being slashed. This is totally goes against the Constitution with war-renouncing Article 9, and the situation is so critical that in the only country that experienced the use of nuclear weapons in war, politicians now speak about nuclear sharing. Women are taking strong actions saying, "No to War Nation!," "Join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons!," and "Use Money for Lives and Disaster-hit Communities, Not for Military Buildup!"

2025 marks not just thirty years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, but also the fortieth year from the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the eightieth year from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With this commemorative year approaching, the Japan Confederation of A- and H- Bomb Sufferers Organizations was awarded 2024 Nobel Peace Prize. 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.

The New Japan Women's Association reiterates its call on all member states gathering at the Sixty-ninth Commission on the Status of Women to become parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to work together for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The association also expresses its resolve to act for building a peaceful, just and sustainable society by broadening cooperation among women with a call of "No Peace, No Equality."