

## **Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament**

### **Speech by Tadamori Oshima Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan General Debate of Monday, August 31, 2015**

#### **Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development: Building the world people want**

Thank you for the kind introduction.

President Saber Chowdhury of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, my fellow Presiding Officers of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my great honor to participate in this important conference at the United Nations Headquarters that brings together presiding officers of parliaments from around the world. Before proceeding, I would like to take this opportunity to thank President Chowdhury and the many others who have worked tirelessly to prepare this conference.

We have arrived at the target date of the Millennium Development Goals, and new sustainable development goals are scheduled to be finalized next month. Thus, in 2016, international society will be taking its first steps toward the achievement of a new set of goals. Mindful of the experiences that we have gained and the lessons that we have learned from the Millennium Development Goals, it will be our responsibility as parliamentarians to draw on all our knowledge and wisdom to put the new goals into action to build the kind of world that people want.

I would like to emphasize that implementation of the new development goals should be based on the concept of human security. In its essence, this is a concept that focuses on the individual, commits to protecting people from a broad range of grave problems that threaten their lives, livelihoods, and dignity, and pledges to support individuals in pursuing and realizing their rich potentialities.

In fulfilling its responsibility in international society, Japan assigns special importance to human security as one of the fundamental principles underlying international cooperation.

In order to achieve the goals of sustainable development, which will bring about the true prosperity that people of the world seek, it is necessary to understand the will of the people and ensure that it is reflected through the democratic process. And the people's will must be properly reflected in our undertakings. Is there any sense in sacrificing democracy for the sake of prosperity? In pursuing sustainable development, we must constantly return to this question and carefully monitor what we are doing.

Prosperity and democracy are two sides of the same coin. Democracy is absolutely essential and indispensable to attaining the goals of sustainable development – in other words, of achieving the kind of human security that cherishes the value of every individual. We bear a very heavy responsibility as parliamentarians. No less important is raising the awareness of the people.

The prosperity that people desire is not merely a material prosperity. Alongside the material, there are spiritual and social values that must be respected and preserved to the highest degree possible. Together with democracy, these values include liberty and equality.

At the end of the Cold War that polarized the postwar world, there was a rising tide of expectation that the international community would finally be able to enjoy peace and stability.

However, in place of a Cold War that pitted East against West, the world was overtaken by regional and local conflicts and ethnic problems, which would have to be solved by international efforts. In the final analysis, the moves driven by geopolitical interests and national interests based on conventional international relations had not been eliminated by the ending of the Cold War.

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by changes in the power balance in international society. As a result of these changes, order has been destabilized in many parts of the world. In certain areas, we have seen tremendous increases in military spending and the negation of existing national borders. Elsewhere, new national disputes involving the law and order of the sea have emerged.

Remembering that military expansion does not lead to the people's prosperity, nations must refrain from causing and heightening regional tension. We must stop to reassess what forms of cooperation are needed to reinforce the foundations of peace in the world. Then we must proceed to build peace based on law and dialogue.

For achieving the peaceful world that the people want, let us stand up together against the common threats to international society. We must act to prevent a regression in international cooperation that gives rise to new conflicts. Toward this end, the endeavors of parliamentarians will become increasingly important and necessary.

Dialogue and mutual understanding among governments is essential. By the same token, this also calls for dialogue and mutual understanding among parliamentarians.

In May this year, the National Diet of Japan and the IPU jointly hosted the Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo. I am pleased to say that about 200 young parliamentarians from 66 countries participated in this conference.

We, as Presiding Officers of our parliaments, must continue to provide full support so that younger generations can achieve the aims that have been the theme of this conference, namely, Democracy, Peace and Prosperity.

I am always mindful that, as parliamentarians, we must set our sights high and aspire to lofty goals; we must be aware of our responsibility to achieve these lofty goals and must at all times endeavor to do so. Having peace of mind and hope are the goals that the world needs. When goals have not been defined, politics results in confusion. Politics without foundation is irresponsible. I hope that we, the Speakers of the parliaments of the world, share an understanding of how important our responsibility to the future is.

In closing, I would like to mention that this year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations.

Japan looks back to the war with a sense of deep repentance. As the only country to have suffered the devastation of atomic bombs, Japan has continued to walk the path of a peace-loving nation throughout the 70 years of the postwar period. Turning to the future, Japan is eager to work closely with other nations to achieve peace, stability, and prosperity in the world in line with initiatives for sustainable development. And it is our commitment to make an even greater contribution to these goals from the perspective of “proactive contribution to peace” based on the principle of international cooperation.

Thank you.