

The General Debate

Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding

● My name is Yumi Yoshikawa, and I am a member of the House of Councillors in the National Diet of Japan as well as deputy head of our delegation.

● I was appointed Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs in August 2022, and during my one-year term, I advocated strongly for the protection of the civilian populace during armed conflicts and for the need of international cooperation as in charge of non-proliferation or international cooperation.

● As a parliamentarian, I am currently making every effort to serve as a “Bridge for peace and understanding” by applying my experience in government to advocate for humanitarian assistance to places like Ukraine and Gaza as well as to provide support for self-reliance and reconstruction thereafter.

● In Japan, the House of Councillors, of which I am a member, is known as the “House of Common Sense” or the “House of Reconsideration.” And The House of Councillors also is responsible of examining financial statements as part of its duty to monitor the Government.

In particular, the House oversees the budget for Official Development Assistance as well as dispatches specialized ODA research groups to countries overseas. The results of our research form the basis of questions to the Government in ODA-related committees.

●Japan actively contributes to the development of the infrastructure in numerous countries through ODA assistance, economic cooperation, and other kinds of support for the building bridges and other facilities.

●Some bridges are a part of the infrastructure that connect countries and regions, but there are also bridges that play a role in closing the gaps between people's hearts and minds.

●In our modern society, globalization has made it impossible to completely separate international issues from domestic ones, which is why national parliaments need to be more actively involved in international affairs than ever before.

●Recently, the situation in Gaza was discussed as an emergency item during the General Debate. The preamble of the Constitution of Japan states that “We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.”

I believe that it is now time to propose that this principle of “the right to a peaceful existence” be upheld as a basic principle of the IPU, which

represents all the peoples of the world.

●By recognizing the right to a peaceful existence of not just our own people but of all the peoples of the world, we Japanese parliamentarians are promising to actively engage in peacemaking through parliamentary diplomacy that serves as a bridge to peace and understanding.