Press Release

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STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. YOSHIKI MINE

AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF JAPAN
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

AT THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 59TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Cluster Debate: Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education

22 October 2004, New York
Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

Almost 60 years ago, it only took a single, relatively primitive atomic bomb to wreak devastation on an entire city. Nowadays, nuclear power is capable of far surpassing past tragedies and destruction, resulting in a far greater loss of lives. Furthermore, with the emergence of terrorism and the potential use of nuclear weapons by terrorists, the urgency of increasing awareness of the real dangers posed by nuclear weapons has never been greater.

Japan, as the only country to have experienced devastation from nuclear bombing, places utmost importance on disarmament and non-proliferation education. It is through such education that people gain a better understanding of the inhumane nature of such weapons and acquire knowledge and skills to make contributions to the achievement of concrete disarmament and non-proliferation measures. Education is an important and yet underutilized tool for strengthening disarmament and non-proliferation for future generations. It encourages critical thinking and attitudinal change so that next generation can choose a culture of peace over violence and war.

It is encouraging to learn that various efforts have been made to date, both nationally and internationally around the world, with the aim of raising public awareness of the dangers of such weapons as well as the need for further strengthening disarmament and non-proliferation measures. I am pleased to note that some useful activities have been taking place here in the United Nations in the margins of this First Committee session to share experiences in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation education among Member States, international organizations, the Department for Disarmament Affairs and civil society. The educational material used in one of these activities, in particular, caught my attention. It focuses on issues relating to the historical experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki including early postwar transcripts, visual documentation and artifacts from the atomic-bombed cities and new teaching methodologies to help young people understand the nuclear legacy that we bequeath to them. Such
opportunities can help us face the realities of history, and hope that we can learn our lessons well.

Japan, for its part, has been making various efforts in this field. I would like to update you with some of our recent efforts:

- Under the UN Disarmament Fellowship Program, Japan has been inviting various government officials to visit Japan each year since 1983, amounting to a total of around 500 participants to date. This year, participants have recently completed their visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which I hope helped to provide an insight into the reality of atomic bombing, and they are with us here during the First Committee session.

- In July of this year, in the margins of the UN Conference on Disarmament Issues held in Sapporo (Japan), a seminar on disarmament education was held with the participation of experts, teachers from local cities and members of international organizations and civil society, providing an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education among local educators.

- Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been making various efforts to disseminate materials on its disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. An English version of this year’s “Japan’s Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Policy” was just published and copies are available just outside this Conference room.

- Japan has also become a co-sponsor of the draft resolution submitted to the First Committee by Mexico entitled “United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education” (A/C.1/59/L.53). Japan very much appreciates Mexico’s initiative in this field.