

Panel on Civil Society Space

– Statement of Japan–

11 March 2014

One of many characteristics of democracy is a robust and pluralistic civil society. It is crucial that States make the necessary efforts to promote and protect a safe and enabling environment for civil society by ensuring such human rights as the freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. This is also in conformity with States' basic obligations under international human rights law.

States have responsibility to take heed of the legitimate aspirations of their citizens, including their calls to redress injustices in society and human rights abuses. Engagement with civil society through dialogue can contribute to the identification of ongoing and future challenges for the society. When considering a new policy or regulatory framework to address evolving social issues, the Government of Japan works to ensure that dialogue with civil society take place in the process. Civil society can play an indispensable role for society's stable development by channelling opinions, concerns and wishes of diverse actors into policy formulation process.

Civil society is also an indispensable partner in providing specific, tailored support that national government response alone cannot cover. For example, in our efforts to recover from the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred three years ago, in order to address the various concerns of women and

violence against women in the affected areas, the Government of Japan is conducting in collaboration with civil society a project that offers a temporary counseling service by phone and in-person, and sends consultants to visit emergency temporary housing for face-to-face counseling. Civil society is playing a role in supporting and complementing the government's efforts to discharge its obligations for the realization of social rights and all other human rights.

As one of the main sponsors of the resolution to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for civil society, Japan hopes to play a role in raising awareness among the international community of the importance of guaranteeing pluralistic civil society and the space for their activities.

I thank you for your attention.