

【Check Against Delivery】

Statement of Mr. Kiminori IWAMA, Ambassador of Japan to Austria

Permanent Representative to the OSCE

OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group Meeting

**“Towards a Peaceful and Inclusive Society: The Nexus between Education
and Political Agency of Women in Afghanistan”**

7 April 2025

Thank you, Madam moderator,

Let me start by thanking all the panelists, who have shared their insights based on their analysis as well as experiences about the situation surrounding women in Afghanistan today.

This year marks the thirty years anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), a blueprint for achieving gender equality and promoting rights and empowerment of women and girls. Today's theme is timely and extremely important, and we recall that, while progress has been made, including the launch of initiatives on empowerment of women in line with Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda which marks 25th anniversary, sadly, gender equality remains a major challenge in many parts of the world.

Madam moderator,

In August this year, it will be four years since the Taliban takeover in 2021. Since then, the Taliban has suspended women's secondary and higher education as well as prohibited Afghan women from working for the United Nations in Afghanistan, following the Taliban's previous decision to prevent women from working for national and international non-governmental organizations. In August 2024, the de facto authorities promulgated the so-called “vice and virtue law” that imposes severe restrictions on women's appearance and behavior in public places. We are deeply concerned about the new edict, banning women and girls from receiving education at medical institutions.

Japan is continuing to strongly urge the Taliban to reverse all policies and practices that restrict human rights and fundamental freedoms of women

and girls. We would like to reiterate the need to ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and girls in Afghanistan as called for in the UNSC Resolution 2681.

Madam moderator,

The international community should not cease its engagement and support for the people of Afghanistan. In addition to severe human rights restrictions, they face a dire humanitarian situation, a fragile economy, and widespread poverty. In this context, we strongly believe that the UN Doha Process is the only platform currently available to the international community to address the challenges faced by the Afghan people.

Despite these difficult times, international organizations continue to provide assistance, and Japan will not cease to support the people of Afghanistan through organizations such as UN Women and UNDP. At the same time, it is important to provide support for Afghan evacuees who have fled to neighboring countries, including OSCE participating countries including Central Asian countries.

We recognize that the OSCE is positioned in a unique way to address the implications of the crisis in a comprehensive manner and value the OSCE's efforts to ensure the survival, livelihood and dignity of the Afghan people. Human security has always belonged to Japan's guiding principles for international cooperation, and Japan has been supporting Afghan women in their pursuit of educational opportunities such as providing scholarship to the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

Based on its engagement as a penholder on Afghanistan at the UNSC in 2023 and 2024, Japan will continue to support the Afghan people at every opportunity, taking advantage of its resumed presence in Kabul since September 2022, its involvement in various UN bodies, and its active participation in the G7. Last but not least, we emphasize that the engagement of the international community is necessary to address the challenges facing the Afghan people, including women's rights.

I thank you.