

**【Check Against Delivery】**

**Statement of Ms. Satoko TOKU, Minister Counsellor,  
Embassy of Japan to Austria  
OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group Meeting  
“Exploring the long-term impact of girl’s education bans on the  
comprehensive security and stability of Afghanistan and the border region”**

9 March 2026

Thank you, Madam moderator,

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

Yesterday (March 8) was International Women's Day, which was established by the UN in 1975. On this day we recognize how far women have expanded their potential, taking up central roles in peace and security, in organizations and communities. Unfortunately, the situation of women in Afghanistan today is far from progressing. It is therefore all the more important to accurately understand the situation surrounding women in Afghanistan, and to consider what we can do for regional peace and stability. The perspectives shared at today's meeting are highly valuable to this end.

Madam moderator,

In August this year, it will be five years since the Taliban takeover in 2021. Since then, the Taliban's systematic discrimination against women and children is taking place, including so-called “vice and virtue law” that imposes severe restrictions on women’s appearance and behavior in public places promulgated in 2024. We are deeply concerned about the discrimination against women and girls, which bans women and girls from receiving education at medical institutions.

We are further concerned about reports of a recent announcement by the Taliban regarding criminal rules of courts that may further institutionalize discrimination and violence against women. Their potential to further

physical violence against women by reinforcing impunity for perpetrators and undermining access to protection for victims and survivors is particularly alarming.

Ensuring that women and girls can receive education, participate in the workforce, and access healthcare without barriers is indispensable for Afghanistan's future stability and prosperity. Persistent restrictions on women's rights have serious long-term consequences, including increased maternal mortality and weakened public health capacity.

Japan calls upon the Taliban to respect Afghanistan's international human rights obligations and ensure women's full access to education, medical training, and essential health services.

Madam moderator,

The international community should not stop engaging with and supporting the people of Afghanistan. We must avoid a repeat of what happened in the 1990s, when Afghanistan became a breeding ground for terrorism due to its isolation from the international community. They face a dire humanitarian situation, a fragile economy, and widespread poverty, in addition to severe human rights restrictions.

In this context, Japan will not cease to support the people of Afghanistan through organizations such as UNDP and UNICEF. At the same time, it is important to provide support for Afghan refugees who have fled to neighboring countries, including OSCE participating countries in Central Asia.

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. The OSCE Border Management Staff College, which Japan has supported since 2012, is strengthening the capabilities of border management officials in Central Asian countries, particularly in light of the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, including cross-border threats such as terrorism and drug trafficking. Also, Japan has been supporting Afghan women in their pursuit of educational opportunities, such as through providing scholarships to the

OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

Japan will continue working with international partners, including the OSCE to support the Afghan people.

I thank you.