

**Statement delivered by  
His Excellency Hiromichi Matsushima,  
Vice Minister for International Affairs of Japan  
on the occasion of the  
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Chairperson,  
Director-General of the FAO,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great honour to have the opportunity to address the FAO Conference on behalf of the Government of Japan.

The theme this time is migration. Migration represents human history itself and it is a phenomenon caused by complicated factors. On this issue, a high-quality document has been prepared. I highly commend FAO's professional work.

Now let me begin by talking about Japan. It is a highly industrialised, trade-orientated and advancing in innovation by utilising IT. However, whilst you look back at its history, you will learn life's cultivation 2 500 years ago by family farming, water drawn and villages formulated. Then the horticultural technology and manufacturing progressed. Internal migration increased giving life to the establishment of our cities, commerce and industries. Instead, problems such as aging and depopulation of rural areas has emerged. How to develop and vitalise our culture and rural areas has always been a challenge. Japan has faced similar problems as you.

Therefore, today, in three points I would like to briefly explain Japan's policy evolution so far.

The first point, how to create employment? Fifty years ago, we started to promote the introduction of manufacturing in rural areas. In addition, in recent years, we are inviting a wide range of industries to rural areas. We have also encouraged farmers to become managers of the six industries, meaning farmers engaging themselves in processing, distribution and sales, and now facilitating a collaboration between welfare and agriculture, thereby enhancing the participation of disabled people in farming.

The second point, how to vitalise rural areas? From 30 years ago, Japan has promoted green tourism, and now we are advocating countryside stay, encouraging visitors and informing travellers to stay in rural areas and enjoy local foods and activities. Also, FAO has designated sites in Japan as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Sites (GIAHS). At these sites, local products are branded, visitors increased, and the rural communities vitalised. The GIAHS program enabled rural communities to gain their self-confidence and pride by recognizing the value of indigenous horticultural practices. Therefore Japan highly welcomes this program.

The third point, how to respond to depopulation and aging? The simple extension of past technologies cannot maintain or develop agriculture with fewer and aging farmers. Therefore, Japan is promoting smart agriculture, actively promoting the introduction of new technologies in the field, for example, automated self-driving tractors, drones and farm management systems using ICT. We exchanged views and a thought appeared, we decided to host delegations, including FAO at the G20 Ministers of Agriculture Meeting. The outcome of the discussion culminated in the Minister's declaration and the Best Practices booklet. We intended to disseminate our experiences and knowledge thereby contributing to the global development of sustainable agriculture.

Now allow me to once again congratulate Dr Qu Dongyu on his election as the new Director-General. We are aware that Dr Qu with his interaction with Japan's researchers has been engaged in research and administration for a long time in China, which is located in East Asia and embraces paddy field farming like Japan. We look forward to Dr Qu's leadership based upon his rich experiences. Japan, through enhancing human resource contribution such as the further participation of Japan's experts in FAOs activities, wishes to continue its contribution.

Together with Dr Qu and other relevant organizations toward that achievement of global food security and Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, we wish to invite Dr Qu together with African countries to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7). We are looking forward to welcoming you and exchanging views on future collaboration between FAO and Japan.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr Graziano da Silva for his dedication so far. Japan highly appreciates his achievements, including the scaling up the GIAHS program. Japan hopes the smoothest transition to the new Director-General, thereby enable FAO to seamlessly continue its engagement.

Finally, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all of FAO staff members including General Service staff members and interpreters. Without your dedication, FAO cannot maintain its huge structure and its relevant role. While conveying my high regards, I will conclude my statement here.

I thank you for your attention.