

International Labour Conference 109th Session, 2021
Noriyisa TAMURA, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare

Thank you Chair, Director General, and Distinguished Delegates. I am Noriyisa TAMURA, Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare. It is a great honor to make a statement today on behalf of the Government of Japan.

First of all, please let me express my appreciation to the International Labour Office for holding this conference under such difficult circumstances and for giving us the opportunity to have a discussion again with member states, workers and employers. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Director-General Guy Ryder and his team for their efforts in the ILO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, I believe that the ILO Monitor and the ILO Sectoral Brief provide very useful information for the world to face this unprecedented crisis. With regard to the theme of the Director-General's report "Work in the Time of COVID", I believe that each country is taking a range of measures to overcome this crisis as COVID-19 has been having various negative effects on socio-economic activities.

With a strong belief in protecting people's lives and livelihoods, the Government of Japan has learned a lot from past experiences and has taken what it considers to be the best possible measures in response to the pandemic. Because protecting employment is our top priority, we have raised the maximum amount of subsidies for employers who keep their workers on the payroll. Furthermore, in order to allow employees of overstuffed companies to work temporarily at other companies with labour shortages, subsidies are provided to companies on both sides. As a result of these various measures taken, the unemployment rate in Japan has been maintained at around 3%. In addition, since employment of women and non-regular workers has been particularly seriously affected, we are expanding opportunities for them to acquire skills to move into new jobs and are also expanding the scope of emergency loans for those in need of support to cover their living expenses.

When we look ahead to the post-COVID-19 society we need to go beyond simply addressing the issues at hand today. Rather, in light of the progress of digital technology and changes in the industrial structure, it is important to realize employment that will be compatible with socio-economic activities under the "new

normal” . This includes promoting the labour transition to growth industries, and encouraging diverse and flexible work styles. To this end, we are developing an environment where workers can proactively enhance their professional skills, and we are considering a voluntary enrollment system for industrial accident compensation insurance for those who have transitioned to new forms of work. In addition, in order to promote the introduction and implementation of quality telework, the relevant guidelines have been revised to clearly state the importance of workers and employers fully discussing and establishing rules in advance. The Government of Japan will continue to make every effort to “build back better” in a human-centered manner without leaving any socially vulnerable people behind by putting special emphasis on social dialogue.

As a founding member of the ILO, Japan has been supporting various forms of development cooperation for more than 40 years through the ILO/Japan multi-bilateral program. This program responds to the actual conditions and needs of countries around the world through initiatives such as improvement of occupational safety and health standards and development of social insurance systems. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Government of Japan has doubled its contribution to the ILO’s 2021 projects compared to last year in order to contribute to the realization of human-centered reconstruction. Together with the other ILO constituents, we hope to overcome the current crisis and go onto “build back better”. I strongly hope that things will return to normal before long and we can get together in person for further discussion at next year’s conference in Geneva.

Thank you.