

(Check Against Delivery)

Welcome remarks by H.E. Dr. Toshiya Hoshino
Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

At the Rare Disease Day Policy Event at the UN
21 February 2019

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the organizers, co-hosts and partners gathered here today for the Rare Disease Day Policy Event.

As a country that has been supporting persons with rare diseases under our Universal Health Coverage system for more than half a century, we are grateful that the issue of rare diseases is gaining momentum as a key policy area at the United Nations as we convene this event. My colleague will discuss Japan's national strategy on rare diseases this afternoon, so I would like to share relevant developments on Universal Health Coverage or UHC.

Today's event is very timely as we prepare for the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC in September. UHC embodies the notion of 'No One Left Behind', the core principle of the SDGs, and underpins the concept of human security, which Japan fundamentally subscribes to. In that regard, we will not have achieved Universal Health Coverage unless and until we ensure that persons with rare diseases are not left behind.

In order to promote the UHC agenda, interested Member States established the Group of Friends of UHC and Global Health as an informal platform for all UN Member States here in New York. The

purpose of the Group of Friends is to build momentum and prepare ourselves, in support of the co-facilitators, Thailand and Hungary, towards the High-Level Meeting on UHC in September, and to work further towards achieving UHC by 2030.

At an inaugural UHC Day event in December, a representative from the rare diseases community shared their voices in the context of achieving UHC. Last Friday during a briefing of the Group of Friends convened with the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Thailand as Co-facilitator, and the WHO Assistant Director General for UHC, we reiterated the need to bring together the voices of all stakeholders, which should include the rare diseases community. I understand the UHC 2030, a multi-stakeholder partnership on UHC, is undertaking a consultation for the Key Asks for the HLM on UHC, so that processes might be of interest to the rare diseases community as well.

The Group of Friends will convene several more events leading up to the HLM on UHC in order to assist the co-facilitators in making the most of the meeting. Some 40 Member States, including many Missions here today, have joined the initiative, but let me or my colleague know if you are interested in joining.

Japan on its part will leverage every opportunity to promote the agenda of UHC, including the G20 summit in Osaka in June, as well as the seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development, or *TICAD VII*, in Yokohama in August leading to the High-Level Meeting on UHC in September.

I trust today's event will serve as a springboard to elevate the agenda of rare diseases in the context of the UN, and also lead to an inclusive and impactful UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC in September. We look forward to listening to your voices.

I thank you.