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JANIC

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Prime Minister Reaffirms Political Will For MDGs Post-Tsunami

But Ministerial MDGs Meeting Shies Away From Tackling Roots of Poverty

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Summary

1. **Japanese NGOs welcome Prime Minister's resolution to reconcile post-disaster reconstruction at home and MDGs achievement abroad.**
2. **However, they criticize the lack of ambitious discussion at the MDGs Follow Up Conference on some of the most critical issues including: the responsibilities and accountability of various actors including rich country governments, and the money needed to achieve the Goals. The discussion was largely detached from the realities faced by women, men, children and diverse marginalized communities suffering poverty and vulnerability.**
3. **They call on Japan to maintain and increase the quantity and quality of its ODA. Civil society commits to help realize the achievement of the MDGs "with a human face".**

On June 2 and 3, the Japanese Government and JICA, together with relevant international organizations, held a "Millennium Development Goals Follow Up Meeting" in Tokyo. This conference aimed to follow up on the agreements at the United Nations MDGs Summit of September 2010, and to reach broad-based agreements on measures needed to achieve the MDGs. We, the Japanese civil society organizations, welcome and applaud the Government of Japan for organizing this event as promised last year, despite the enormous challenges it is facing since the Great East Japan Earthquake. Since the announcement of this meeting, we have offered the organizers maximum cooperation and collaboration to ensure meaningful participation of civil society.

Today the MDGs are under threat: the precious progress of the last decade are beginning to reverse as a result of the food and oil price spikes, and governments, especially of rich countries, seem to be suffering an MDGs amnesia as they find it increasingly difficult to keep their aid promises since the economic crisis. Current political instability of The Middle East and North Africa and its related crises are also diverting their political attention away from this "greatest collective anti-poverty project in human history", as one of the civil society participants put it at the conference. It was in this context that Prime Minister Naoto Kan stated in his opening remarks that Japan would honor its commitments for the MDGs. The nation of Japan should be proud of its leader's political will to commit to the achievement of the MDGs despite the devastation of the 3/11 disasters.

However, the actual meeting left much to wish for. Where it should have focused on how to fill the huge gaps between the goals and the actual progress and overcome the bottlenecks, the sessions spent most of the time on sharing micro-scale "good practices", unilateral initiatives of Japan and other institutions. As a result, the meeting failed to identify respective actors' responsibilities on existing, unfulfilled, multilateral promises and how they could make a difference. Also, the conference completely avoided the most crucial question of financial resources that are prerequisite to carrying out those initiatives at any meaningful scale.

Japanese NGOs welcomed the attention the conference paid to the questions of equity in achieving the MDGs in the contexts of vulnerability, reflecting the concept of human security, the foundational philosophy of Japan's aid policies. However, due to lack of both the participation by those communities struggling to fight poverty and overcome vulnerabilities, and of insight into the concrete realities they face, the discussion never went beyond abstract sophism and lacked the "human face" of the MDGs. We believe this is attributable to the lack of opportunities given to civil society, especially the directly affected communities to engage and participate in any meaningful way.

In his opening remark, PM Kan emphasized his commitment to realize, through the efforts to achieve the MDGs, a society that is caring for the disadvantaged, and resilient enough to enable each and every individual to realize their potentials. To promote such a caring and resilient society around the world, Japan must more proactively contribute to the global efforts to achieve the MDGs, including through financial means. This means not further cutting but increasing ODA in the 2nd and 3rd supplementary budget as well as the budget for FY2012. We the civil society organizations of Japan will do our own part, through collaboration and cooperation, in order to achieve the MDGs "with a human face" and realize human security.

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