

**Speech by Minister Kato in Charge of the Abduction Issue
At the Co-host symposium by CSIS**

Monday, May, 2 2016
Washington D.C.

Ambassador Lee, Ambassador King, Dr. Green, Dr. Cha, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Katsunobu Kato, and I am the Minister in Charge of the Abduction Issue.

It is a great pleasure for me to co-host this event with CSIS, one of the most renowned think-tanks in the United States. Let me extend my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Green, who kindly accepted my offer.

As the Cabinet Minister in Charge of the Abduction Issue, which is a top policy priority of the Abe Administration, it is also my honor to have an opportunity to explain how I view the current situation surrounding human rights issues in North Korea, including the abduction issue, and how the Government of Japan addresses those significant and commonly shared issues of international concern.

Today, I am particularly eager to engage in fruitful discussions with my distinguished colleagues of the close friends, the United States and the Republic of Korea, as well as members of the distinguished audience, regarding those common concerns.

In Japan, we are now enjoying so called ‘Golden Week’, a week-long-holiday. Thus, this is indeed, literally a golden opportunity for me to have an in-depth discussion with the esteemed participants, including our excellent – but named for a different color – moderator, Dr. Green.

In February two years ago, the Report of the commission of inquiry (COI) on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was released. Regarding human rights violations in North Korea, it is stated in that report, "The gravity, scale, and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world." The abductions of Japanese conducted by North Korea are one form of such human rights violations committed by North Korea. In the COI report, the issue of the abductions of Japanese is described in parallel with other similar cases of abductions and enforced disappearance from the Republic of Korea and other countries, and is categorized into the item of "Abductions and enforced disappearances from other countries". The Report also concludes that, in many instances, the violations of human rights found by the commission constitute "crimes against humanity".

Basic Position of the Japanese Government Concerning the Abduction Issue

The Japanese Government has identified 17 abductees including 5 abductees who have returned home, and there are numerous cases (886, to be precise) under investigations and inquiries by the police authorities in which the possibility of abduction by North Korea cannot be ruled out.

The abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea is a matter of grave concern that undermines the national sovereignty of Japan and the lives and safety of the Japanese people. At the same time, the issue is a grave matter in terms of human rights and humanitarian concerns as abductees' precious future, countless dreams, and irreplaceable time with their families have been taken away.

Abductees and their families have been grown old in the 40 years since they were captured by North Korea. Some of the family members were unable to see the abductees again and passed away

in sorrow. There is no time to waste in rescuing the abductees. With this understanding of the issue, as the Abe cabinet considers that the Government should take responsibility for resolving it, one that it has given the highest priority, it has been taking steps to resolve it under the principles of “dialogue and pressure” and “action for action” irrespective of whether they are officially identified as abductees.

Development Concerning the Abduction Issue between Japan and North Korea

The abductions of Japanese by North Korea were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s; however, North Korea formally admitted to the abductions for the first time during the visit of the then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to North Korea in September 2002 at the first Japan-DPRK Summit Meeting. Kim Jong-il, then Chairman of the National Defense Commission of North Korea informed Japan that only 4 abductees were surviving, 8 had died, and there was no record of entry into North Korea for one.

At that time, the two leaders signed the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, which describes the manner of the relationship between Japan and North Korea. The Declaration states, “Both leaders confirmed the shared recognition that establishing a fruitful political, economic, and cultural relationship between Japan and the DPRK through the settlement of the unfortunate past between them and the outstanding issues of concern would be consistent with fundamental interests of both sides, and would greatly contribute to the peace and stability of the region.” It also states, “Both sides confirmed that they would co-operate with each other in order to maintain and strengthen the peace and stability of Northeast Asia,” “Both sides confirmed that, for an overall resolution of the nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula, they would comply with all related international agreements,” and “Both sides also confirmed the necessity of resolving security problems including nuclear and missile issues by promoting

dialogue among countries concerned.”

According to the Pyongyang Declaration, which includes the basic ideas for achieving the peace and stability of Northeast Asia, while North Korea will sincerely work on various outstanding issues such as the abduction, nuclear and missile issues, during the normalization process, Japan will provide economic co-operation with North Korea after the normalization of diplomatic relations. There is, however, a huge gap between the ideals described in the Pyongyang Declaration and the actuality of the prevailing circumstances, in which North Korea makes no attempt to take an honest approach to the comprehensive resolution of various outstanding problems.

Indeed, based on the Pyongyang Declaration, Prime Minister Abe has repeatedly emphasized that without the resolution of the abduction issue, there can be no normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and North Korea, and provocative actions will result in paying a heavy price. Without resolving various outstanding issues such as the abduction, nuclear, and missile issues, North Korea cannot look ahead to a bright future.

Meanwhile, regrettably, North Korea has continued to take actions which contradict the Pyongyang Declaration instead of sincerely responding to various outstanding issues of concern, even after signing the Declaration.

To be more specific, in the Japan-DPRK Summit Meeting, North Korea admitted to the abduction of Japanese people and apologized according to the decision of Kim Jong-il, then Chairman of the National Defense Commission of North Korea. As a result, five survivors and their families returned home. Regarding victims who were said to have died, however, North Korea submitted remains as proof of their deaths, which were identified as the remains of other persons. Therefore, North Korea’s response towards Japan has been thoroughly lacking in good faith.

Meanwhile, the Japanese side has long continued to strongly demand that North Korea secure the safety and immediate return of all abductees, investigate to reveal the truth of the abductions, and extradite those responsible for carrying out abductions to Japanese authorities. As a result, in May 2014, at the Japan-North Korea Intergovernmental Consultations in Stockholm, the both sides finally reached an agreement. According to that agreement, North Korea is to establish the Special Investigation Committee to conduct comprehensive and full-scale investigation on all Japanese nationals including abductees. Japan decided to lift part of its measures against North Korea. That agreement precisely reflects our principles of “dialogue and pressure” and “action for action.”

Based on those principles, in the agreement, Japan stated that Japan will consider, at an appropriate time, to provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea from the humanitarian viewpoint, so as to urge North Korea to take sincere and specific actions towards the resolution of the abduction issue. It is regrettable, however, that we have not seen any progress towards the return of the abductees since North Korea started its comprehensive investigation nearly two years ago. In addition, North Korea conducted a nuclear test last January and ballistic missile launching after that. Therefore, we decided to take unilateral measures against North Korea towards a comprehensive resolution of various outstanding issues, namely, the abduction, nuclear, and missile issues.

Responding to our decision, North Korea unilaterally insisted that this is little short of the declaration of its own scrapping of the Stockholm agreement and declared that the comprehensive investigation into all the Japanese will be stopped and that the “Special Investigation Committee” will be dissolved. We protested against North Korea’s claim as we were unable to accept it at all. North Korea must conduct comprehensive and full-scale investigations based on the commitment made by North Korea itself in Stockholm and must allow all abductees to return home as soon as possible based on the result of the investigations.

Efforts by the International Community on the Human Rights Situation in North Korea

The Government of Japan is a concerned party of human rights violations in North Korea. As a concerned party, we have lately been encouraged by the increasing momentum gained by the international community towards the improvement of North Korea's human rights situation more than ever before. As everyone here is familiar with the actions taken so far, I will not go into details. Those actions include:

1. The release of the Report of the commission of inquiry (COI) on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
2. Official discussion at the UN Security Council for two consecutive years subsequent to the adoption of the resolution concerning North Korea's human rights situation at the UN General Assembly.
3. The Report of pursuing accountability of North Korea for "crimes against humanity" proposed by the UN Special Rapporteur, Marzuki Darusman, and the resolution reflecting that report at the UN Human Rights Council held last March, calling upon to establish a group of independent experts on accountability.

In addition, at the Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting which took place at the occasion of the Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington, D.C. this spring, the three leaders confirmed the need to move forward with cooperation in the security field among Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea in order to deal with the threat from North Korea and Japan obtained understanding and support for Japan's efforts in the abduction issue. At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting, Prime Minister Abe explained that Japan intends to continue cooperation aimed at reaching a solution to North Korea's human rights and humanitarian problems, including the abductions issue. In response, President Park made an encouraging comment, noting that similar problems exist in the Republic of Korea and would like to

cooperate on this issue.

In the United States, the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016 was enacted this February. In this act, one of the requirements for suspending the sanctions is that the Government of North Korea has made progress toward accounting for and repatriating the citizens of other countries abducted by the Government of North Korea. Also, one of the requirements for termination of the sanctions is that the Government of North Korea has made significant progress toward fully accounting for and repatriating United States citizens abducted by the Government of North Korea. We welcome these developments. And a concurrent resolution expressing concern over the disappearance of David Sneddon, and for other purposes has been submitted to both houses of congress. We are keeping a close watch on the discussions in Congress.

Basic Stance of the Japanese Government towards the Future

While closely cooperating with members of the international community, which is aiming to improve North Korea's human rights situation, we will continue to address the issues based on the principles of "dialogue and pressure" and "action for action." North Korea has repeated a series of provocative actions since nuclear testing in January and has not listened to the voice of the international community genuinely. It is necessary to exert pressure on North Korea to feel "hurt" and have North Korea clearly recognize that provocative actions will result in paying a heavy price.

Prime Minister Abe claims that there is no point in conducting talks if they do not aim at resolving the abduction issue; otherwise, the abduction issue cannot be resolved. He also insists that it will be impossible for North Korea to envision their future without the resolution of the abduction issue. What does his comment imply?

The abduction issue as a serious issue of concern between Japan and North Korea is as important as nuclear and missile issues. As I explained about the Pyongyang Declaration earlier, without the resolution of the abduction issue, which is as important as nuclear and missile issues for Japan, there can be no normalization of the relations. The Japanese Government also will not provide humanitarian assistance or lift sanctions without North Korea's concrete actions towards the resolution of various outstanding issues, including the abduction issue. In other words, North Korea needs to realize that unless they resolve various outstanding issues, namely, the abduction, nuclear, and missile issues, it will be impossible for North Korea to envision their future.

On the other hand, if North Korea sincerely works on various outstanding issues and resolves them, in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, Japan can build up a constructive relationship for the future with North Korea, including the settlement of the unfortunate past between them, and the positive involvement of the international community with North Korea will deepen. Based on that assumption, Japan strives to closely cooperate with the U.S., the Republic of Korea, and the United Nations so that North Korea works on resolving the aforementioned issues.

In North Korea, due to its sociopolitical system, Kim Jong-un, First Chairman of North Korea's National Defense Commission, has the authority to make final policy decisions. Thus, the Japanese Government (the Abe administration) would like to urge Kim Jong-un to gain an accurate understanding of the situation which North Korea faces in the international community and to decide to return all abductees as quickly as possible through his efforts of sincerely working on various outstanding issues of concern, namely, the abduction, nuclear, and missile issues, and such actions would be the rational choice for North Korea.

The Japanese Government will continue to closely cooperate with

the international community according to the aforementioned approach. At the same time, unless North Korea takes positive measures towards the resolution of its various outstanding issues, the Japanese Government will continue to impose strict sanctions on North Korea as well as seek a meaningful “dialogue” which can lead to a comprehensive resolution of those issues.