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Remarks by H.E. Mr. Motohide Yoshikawa
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations
On the Occasion of an Informal Interactive Dialogue
On the Responsibility to Protect

8 September 2015

Mr. Chair,

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this timely meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his seventh report on the Responsibility to Protect. I highly value this annual report as it helps enhance discussions between Member States. My appreciation also goes to Special Adviser Jennifer Welsh and her staff for their hard work.

Mr. Chair,

Today, I wish to speak on two points.

First is our decision to join the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect.

Second is the vote of the Security Council on the Responsibility to Protect.

It is my special pleasure to announce here today that Japan has appointed a national focal point for the Responsibility to Protect and has joined the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect as well.

Japan had previously refrained from involving itself in the global fora on the Responsibility to Protect for the following reason:

As a country which promotes the concept of human security for decades, Japan strongly believed that a clear distinction needed be made between human security and the Responsibility to Protect. However, we frequently observed these two terms being conflated, which obliged Japan to abstain from any activity that might cause misunderstandings.

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Fortunately, our concerns regarding such misunderstanding were obviated by General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/290, adopted on 10 September 2012, which states that “The notion of human security is distinct from the responsibility to protect and its implementation.”(Para 3(e))

Furthermore, the concept of the Responsibility to Protect has recently become clearer, thanks to discussions held among the member states. Based on these developments, we now believe that the potential for misunderstanding of these two concepts is quite low.

From this perspective, we have decided that it is time to join the global networks on the Responsibility to Protect. We will participate actively in discussions with relevant Member States, the UN Secretariat and civil society, with the aim of preventing mass atrocities.

Mr. Chair,

The second point I wish to make concerns the role of the Security Council. There is no doubt that the Security Council plays an especially important role in implementing the Responsibility to Protect. And yet, tragedies in recent years demonstrated that the Security Council is not fulfilling its function to prevent or stop atrocities. Syria is a typical case in point. In our view, one of the causes of the inaction of the Security Council is the exercise of the veto power by the Permanent Members.

In this regard, France, one of the Permanent Members of the Security Council, has been promoting the idea that all Permanent Members should refrain from using the veto in situations of mass atrocities. The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group also proposes that neither Permanent nor Non-permanent Members should vote against Security Council resolutions in such cases. These are both important and welcoming initiatives. We need to continue our discussion on these initiatives as part of the efforts by the international community to implement the Responsibility to Protect.

