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Statement by H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Minami
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At the Informal Interactive Dialogue of the General Assembly
On the Responsibility to Protect

Trusteeship Council Chamber
6 September 2016

Mr. Moderator,

At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for your consistent leadership on this issue.

[As many speakers have already pointed out,] there is a wide recognition among Member States today that the international community should take necessary measures to protect populations from atrocities. Nevertheless, as the Secretary-General's report pointed out, we still face many crises around the world, such as those in Iraq, Syria, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea and South Kordofan in Sudan. There, States and non-State actors threaten populations and disregard their responsibilities to protect.

It goes without saying that the Security Council plays a crucial role in protecting people and responding to atrocities. In this context, the initiative by France and Mexico on the suspension of the veto in cases of mass atrocities, as well as the Code of Conduct adopted by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group, are both important and welcome. Japan supports these initiatives and will participate in the discussions and actions of the Council in light of these movements.

Mr. Moderator,

I would also like to stress the importance of prevention. The international community has historically been reluctant to act decisively against the risk of mass atrocities until it has already seen mounting casualties. However, if we can address the structural drivers of conflict and violence, such as through establishing rule of law and good governance, or tackling social inequality and discrimination, we might be able to prevent mass atrocities from occurring in the first place.

In this connection, on 28 July, Japan hosted a Security Council open debate on “Peacebuilding in Africa” during its Presidency. The Presidential Statement which was adopted on this occasion emphasized the importance of building trust and the rule of law and utilizing science and technology in order to maintain sustainable peace. We believe that such approaches towards conflict prevention could also contribute to preventing mass atrocities.

Mr. Moderator,

Eleven years have passed since the concept of the Responsibility to Protect was unanimously established by the General Assembly. Since then, much has been discussed around this concept and there were some developments to improve the system-wide capacity of the UN to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. But in such a time of crisis, we need to reaffirm our commitment to our responsibility and redouble our efforts to protect populations from tragedies which we are still facing today.

I thank you, Mr. Moderator.