

DC

Keynote Speech by His Excellency Keiji FURUYA,
Minister of State for Abduction Issue
at JICC, Washington DC

1. Greetings

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for attending the international symposium on the Abductions of Japanese Citizens by North Korea hosted by the Government of Japan.

I am Keiji FURUYA, Minister of State for Abduction Issue. Since I have visited Washington, D. C. many times as a Diet member accompanying the family members of the abductees, it is my utmost pleasure to speak today on the abduction problem in the capacity of State Minister in charge of the problem.

2. Terrorism in Boston (and a moment of silence)

In beginning my speech, please let me extend my deepest condolences to those who died in the recent bombing in Boston on behalf of not only the Japanese government but also the Japanese nation as a whole. As President Obama stated, this is an act of terrorism that killed and injured a number of innocent people. As for Japan, we also experienced a terrorist attack in Algeria this January in which dozens of people were killed including ten Japanese citizens.

These acts of terrorism are absolutely intolerable. Japan has been making utmost efforts to fight terrorism in close cooperation with the international community

including the US and will continue to do so.

Another thing I would like to emphasize is that the abductions I am going to speak today are nothing but acts of terrorism committed by the regime of North Korea.

Having said that, I now would like to ask you to join me in a moment of silence in honor of who have become victims of terrorism in Boston ~~and, Algeria, and all other places in the world.~~

(Silence)

Thank you very much.

3. Introduction

In today's symposium, the family members of the abductees and the representatives of the NGOs supporting the families will speak following my remarks. From the US side, Ambassador Robert King, US Special Envoy on North Korean Human Right Issues and Dr. Victor Cha, Senior Adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies have kindly accepted our invitation to speak in today's symposium. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express my appreciation to Ambassador King and Dr. Cha.

I also would like to introduce Mr. Shu Watanabe, member of House of Representatives of Japanese Diet and Chairman of the Committee for Abduction Issue of the opposition party, Democratic Party of Japan. (Mr. Watanabe, would you please stand up?) The Japanese Government has built a bipartisan structure, or an "All

Japan Formation” for abduction issue. Mr. Watanabe’s participation in this symposium symbolizes the bipartisan efforts. Mr. Watanabe will appear in the Q & A session later today.

Now, I will start my remarks. Today, I would like to address several points including Japan’s policy toward North Korea, current situation of the abduction problem, the abduction problem as a human rights issue, and the outlook for the resolution of the problem.

4. Japan’s Policy toward North Korea

First, I would like to touch upon Japan’s Policy toward North Korea.

North Korea’s recent missile launching and nuclear testing absolutely cannot be tolerated. In addition to rigorously implementing the sanction measures based on the resolutions of UN Security Council, Japan has imposed its own additional sanction measures on North Korea. One of the reasons of imposing these additional sanctions is that North Korea has not at all acted in good faith on the abduction issue.

On the other hand, Japan has always kept the door open for consultations with North Korea. In November last year, an intergovernmental talk was held after four years’ absence and it has been agreed to continue talks on the abduction problem and other issues. However, subsequent talks have been suspended after North Korea announced they would launch a missile.

I would like to make it clear that Japan wants to

comprehensively resolve outstanding issues of concern, including the abduction problem, nuclear and missile issues and normalize its diplomatic relations with North Korea. For that, however, North Korea needs to take concrete actions to solve these issues.

5. Current situation of the abduction problem

Now, I would like to address the next topic; current situation of the abduction problem.

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a string of incidents in which Japanese citizens disappeared under unnatural circumstances. North Korea is suspected of committing abductions in many of these incidents. To date, the Government of Japan has identified 17 citizens as victims of abduction by North Korea, and there are still other cases in which the possibility of abduction cannot be ruled out.

At the first Japan-North Korea Summit Meeting held in September 2002, then supreme leader Mr. Kim Jong-Il himself admitted for the first time that North Korea had in fact abducted Japanese citizens and apologized for that. The information provided by North Korea at the meeting was that only five abductees were still alive and eight had been dead.

While the five surviving abductees and their family members have returned to Japan, no credible evidence has been provided by North Korea on the fate of the eight abductees that North Korea claims to be dead. For instance, the “remains” of Ms. Megumi YOKOTA, the

symbolic woman of this issue and Mr. Kaoru MATSUKI presented by the North Korean side had turned out to contain DNA belonging to other persons. All other “evidences” on the “death” of other abductees provided by North Korea were far less credible and that is explained in detail in the white brochure distributed today. I believe that the fact that North Korea had to present such fake evidences itself implies that those abductees are still alive.

The abduction problem is still unresolved and the abductees are still waiting to be rescued.

I would like to make it crystal clear that the Government of Japan will firmly maintain its policy that Japan would not normalize diplomatic relations with North Korea unless the abduction problem is resolved, and will make every efforts to secure all of the abductees’ safety and bring them back to Japan at the earliest time, regardless of whether they are officially identified as abductees. The Government of Japan will also demand that North Korea should make all abduction cases accounted for and hand over those who conducted abductions.

In today’s symposium, three family members of the abductees who have not yet returned to Japan are planned to speak.

Mr., Shigeo IIZUKA is a brother of an abductee, Ms. Yaeko TAGUCHI. The abduction of Ms. TAGUCHI was revealed by a testimony of Ms. Kim Hyon-Hui, a North Korean special agent who blew up a Korean Airliner and killed 115 people in November 1987 disguising herself as

a Japanese woman. Ms. Kim Hyon-Hui stated that she had learned Japanese from Ms. TAGUCHI in North Korea.

Mr. Teruaki MASUMOTO is a brother of an abductee, Ms. Rumiko MASUMOTO. Ms. MASUMOTO was abducted with her boyfriend, Mr. Shuichi ICHIKAWA in August 1978. Last year, Mr. MASUMOTO made a testimony in a public hearing held in the European Parliament.

Mr. Shichiro KOBAYASHI is a brother of Mr. Sakae KOBAYASHI who went missing in August 1966. Though Mr. KOBAYASHI has not been designated as an abductee by the Government of Japan, a NGO considers the possibility of abduction by North Korea cannot be ruled out on this case. Professor ARAKI, who will be giving a speech shortly, is a representative of the NGO.

6. Abduction problem as a human rights issue

Let me go on to the next topic, the abduction problem as a human rights issue.

Regarding the wide range of human rights violations in North Korea, UN General Assembly has adopted resolutions on human rights situation of North Korea every year since 2005 that strongly urges North Korea to resolve the abduction problem urgently.

Human rights situation in North Korea is a matter of grave concern for the international community and the abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea are truly

grave human rights violations as well as crimes committed by the state which have been conducted in peacetime in order to force them to contribute to the regime's illicit activities. .

It also should be pointed out that North Korea has not only abducted citizens of Japan and South Korea, but also of other countries. In May 2011, a NGO in the US, The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea publicized a report on the abduction problem titled «Taken!» and pointed out that North Korea had abducted citizens of 14 countries. The committee also says that a US student David Sneddon, who went missing in Yunnan Province, China, in August 2004, might have been abducted by North Korea. Needless to say, it is up to the US Government to decide how to deal with the Sneddon case. The only thing I can share with you today is that it took a long time for the Japanese government to rightly recognize the abduction cases and take appropriate measures when the cases first unfolded. From that perspective, it is my personal hope that the US Government would handle the case in a prompt and appropriate way.

7. Outlook for the resolution of the abduction problem

Please let me turn to the last topic, the outlook for the resolution of the abduction problem.

Some of you may think that North Korea's recent missile launching and nuclear testing have made the situation so tense that it is getting more and more difficult to resolve the abduction problem. I have seen

such comments in the media, too.

I don't agree with such observations. I believe the situation is the other way round.

To elaborate on that point, I would like to illustrate that significant changes are taking place concerning the three important conditions for the resolution of the abduction problem and that there are now growing opportunities of resolving it.

The first condition is related to North Korea. Mr. Kim Jong-Eun, the young son of former leader Mr. Kim Jong-Il succeeded his father last year. Since then, Mr. Kim Jong-Eun has been working on various issues including stabilizing the leadership, securing the national security, managing the relationship with the US and other countries, and reconstructing the economy. Many analysts, however, think that his initiatives have brought about little success until now and regard North Korea's recent provocative behaviors as a kind of brinkmanship to break the deadlock. I also think North Korea is facing a deadlock. If you look at the situation objectively, you would understand that North Korea has no other way but to be cooperative with the international community.

Thus, I believe there is a considerably high possibility that the young leader of the regime eventually understand this point and change the provocative behaviors. Then, North Korea should resolve the abduction problem.

On this regard, it would become quite meaningful that Mr. Kim Jong-Eun himself does not seem to have

been directly involved in the abductions. This is the most important change of situation in the North Korean side concerning the abduction problem.

The second condition is related to the international circumstances. The international community has strengthened the sanctions against North Korea in response to its recent provocative actions. Even China which has been widely regarded as the sole ally of North Korea might have started to change its attitude toward the regime after the third nuclear testing. According to some press articles, the Chinese government has recently issued instructions to the related agencies to rigidly implement the sanction measures against North Korea based on the resolutions of UN Security Council describing them as “international responsibilities.” The international community has been moving to besiege North Korea.

The last but not least condition is related to Japan. In recent years, prime ministers changed one after another. I have to admit that the instability of Japanese administrations has become a part of the obstacle to the negotiation with North Korea. On the contrary, the Abe administration has been enjoying high approval ratings and it has been making a number of actions concerning the abduction problem. We have established a firm base to resolve the problem.

Now, how should Japan act to resolve the problems concerning North Korea including the abduction when the important conditions are significantly changing and the opportunities for resolving the abduction problem is growing?

Japan has been taking a tough position toward North Korea. At the same time, we are ready to get to a table to talk with North Korea if it changes its behaviors.

As for the abduction problem, in particular, Japan should act proactively to resolve the problem because it is a question of whether Japan as a sovereign country can ultimately protect its own nationals. To be sure, all problems with North Korea such as nuclear and missile need to be resolved through the cooperation of the related countries including the US.

At the same time, I would like to seek for a possibility in which Japan removes the “thorn”, or an obstacle stuck between Japan and North Korea with our own hands in the entry phase of the process. By doing so, I believe that Japan would be able to make greater contributions to the efforts by the related countries to de-nuclearize the Korean Peninsula. In other words, even if significant developments are achieved on nuclear and missile problems, I believe it would be difficult for Japan to actively contribute to the large-scale humanitarian aids which would be resumed immediately after such developments as long as there are no significant developments on the abduction problem.

In relation to that, I would like to introduce you the fact that more than ten million Japanese people have signed their names on a request to resolve the abduction problem immediately, which will be explained by Professor Nishioka later today. I would like to reiterate that the Japanese government is backed by such a firm resolution of the nation to resolve the problem.-

On the other hand, as I have repeatedly stated, understandings and supports from the US side is most important for Japan when it acts proactively on the problem. The US-Japan alliance and their mutual trust have been restored under the Abe Administration. On this regard, Secretary of State Mr. John Kerry stated in the Japan-US foreign ministers meeting last month that he completely supports the Japanese position regarding the abduction problem and that he can understand how the families are feeling. He also said that he will work on this issue seriously. I feel very much encouraged by his statements.

8. Prime Minister Abe's statement and conclusion

On February 22 this year, Prime Minister Abe visited Washington, D.C. and delivered a policy speech at the CSIS. The Prime Minister stated on North Korea as follows;

(Quote)

“The Asia-Pacific region becomes more and more prosperous with the exception of a single country. That exception, of course, is North Korea.

Their nuclear ambition should not be tolerated. Unless they give up on developing a nuclear arsenal, missile technologies, and release all the Japanese citizens they abducted, my government will give them no reward. Japan should work tirelessly with the U.S., South Korea, others and the United Nations to stop them from pursuing those ambitions.

Now, if you look at the lapel of my jacket, I am

wearing a blue-ribbon pin. It is to remind myself, each and every day, that I must bring back the Japanese people who were abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 80s.”

(Unquote)

As you can see, I am wearing the blue-ribbon pin, too.

Please let me repeat once again.

The abductees are still alive in North Korea and they must be rescued.

I strongly hope that through today's symposium, the international community would further strengthen the cooperation on the abduction problem.

I will continue to dedicate myself to bringing all the abductees back to Japan.

Thank you very much.