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Remarks

By

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Good morning,

Mr President (Khoo),

Mr Secretary General (Noble),

The Ministers of State,

The Police Director Generals,

The National Central Bureau Heads,

Distinguished participants,

My name is KODAIRA Tadamasa, the Minister of State of Japan. I also oversee the Japanese Police as the Chairman of the National Commission on Public Safety. I am honoured to be here with you today, and I would like to express my respect and gratitude to INTERPOL and the Italian authorities for hosting this General Assembly.

As many of you know, in March of last year Japan experienced an unprecedented earthquake, what we call the 'Great East Japan Earthquake'. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to extend my appreciation, on behalf of Japan, to the Asian and all other member countries as well as international organizations for their warm support provided to our country.

In Japan, faced with such a great disaster, we hardly saw violent looting in the affected areas. This fact, I believe, indicates how well Japan's public security is being maintained.

Yet, I am sorry to say that no society is immune to crime. After the war, Japan is said to have been one of the safest countries in the world. However, since about 1997, Japanese people began to worry about the deterioration of public security. In 2002, the number of offenses known to the police was around 2,850,000, or 2,239 cases per 100,000 people. This is an increase of 50 per cent in only five years.

Considering the situation, almost 10 years ago the Japanese police launched full-scale efforts for crime prevention. Security concerns, especially those in urban areas, include street violence and criminal groups which gather in cities searching for quick profits. In order to respond effectively to such security concerns, it is necessary for the police to collect and analyse relevant information and to employ every possible investigation method, as would be the case in any country. Therefore, taking this opportunity, I would like to introduce Japan's initiatives that are proving to be effective, particularly the ones against violent crime that takes place on the streets.

Firstly, I would like to touch upon our government's overall approaches.

In 2003, Japan established the 'Ministerial Meeting Concerning Measures against Crime', which has been presided over by the Japanese prime minister, and compiled the 'Action Plan for the Realization of a Society Resistant to Crime', thus promoting various measures based on the plan. To press forward with comprehensive measures for crime prevention, in addition to the police, a variety of actors, such as administrative organs, business enterprises and local communities, are all working together and engaging in various efforts to realize a society where citizens can live free of crime.

Secondly, I would like to explain how the Japanese police have developed a partnership with local communities.

In Japan, the smallest unit of the police to maintain regional safety is the Koban system, which is composed of police boxes called 'Koban', where a relatively small number of police officers are staffed 24 hours a day in shifts, and residential police boxes called 'Chuzaisho', where a single officer resides with his or her family. This Koban system was first introduced 140 years ago, and today there are 13,000 police boxes throughout Japan. Police officers who are deployed to Koban are to take requests, opinions and concerns of local residents into consideration, and to maintain and enhance public security within their jurisdiction. Those activities are conducted in partnership with local resident organizations, including neighbourhood community associations. As such, the Koban system serves as a basis for the police to be a welcome part of the local communities. The police are also in partnership with local governments, and therefore a framework for enhancing public security is being maintained.

Under such a framework, in order to enhance public security, the Japanese police have promoted 'visible policing' by deploying many of their uniformed officers to neighbourhood patrols, while thoroughly carrying out apprehending and policing activities against crime. The police go on patrol not only in patrol cars but also by bicycle or on foot.

Also, through the cooperation between the public and private sectors related to urban planning, particularly with local residents, chambers of commerce and neighborhood community associations, the police have promoted measures to make the local communities attractive for the residents but difficult for criminals.

Furthermore, the police have proactively supported anti-crime activities by local governments and citizens and raised their awareness regarding crime prevention. As a result, a large number of citizens are now engaged in voluntary activities in crime prevention, and there is a growing tendency among the society that the entire local community is responsible for anti-crime activities.

Thirdly, I would like to discuss how we ensure the safety and security of the people through the use of security cameras.

In Japan, the police are working on the promotion of installing security cameras in downtown areas so as to reduce the total number of offenses, offer a sense of safety to citizens and ensure a peaceful life.

The security cameras are installed by the police and also by the local governments and private enterprises. It is estimated that the total number of security cameras in use in Japan is about 3,700,000.

Through the police and citizen partnership which has been developed steadily over the years, along with the introduction of IT technology such as security cameras, I believe that today, public security is being achieved in a more effective manner.

Due to these past efforts, the fundamental idea that the entire society needs to work towards crime prevention has been spreading, and the number of offenses has decreased by half.

So far I have illustrated the joint efforts of the public and private sectors in Japan. I believe that it is a key responsibility of the government to ensure and enhance public security. Nevertheless, the police alone cannot maintain public security. We need the cooperation of various administrative organs, business enterprises, local communities and, above all, our citizens.

Lastly, I would like to point out that, in addition to violent crimes in urban areas, we are faced with many challenges. Among others, cybercrime, which is being committed beyond borders, has become a new threat to the security in each of our countries.

For instance, regarding remote controlling malicious programs, there were cases in which information was stolen from the computers receiving targeted e-mail attacks. Recently in Japan, there were incidents regarding multiple online threats of committing crimes, such as murdering and bombing, sent to the websites of governmental agencies as well as to public e-mail addresses of private enterprises, from the computers infected with new types of viruses and are remotely controlled by the suspect under the disguise of their actual owners, and have become a major social problem.

It was revealed that, in these cases, the suspect used servers located in multiple foreign countries to commit the crime. In order to fight against such anonymous cybercrime and to identify the suspects, it is critical that we all work together. As for INTERPOL, I have high expectations in its future efforts.

It will be my pleasure to share some of our views at this occasion with the participants in this meeting, each of which are responsible for maintaining public security in their respective countries, and we hope to make any contributions that are within our ability.

Thank you.