

Statement by Ambassador Kenzo Oshima on the Selection of a New Secretary- General at the Sixth Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the General Assembly

19 April 2006

Mr. Co-Chair,

The appointment of a new Secretary-General upon the recommendation of the Security Council, as provided in Article 97 of the Charter, is among the important responsibilities of the General Assembly. It will be very beneficial for the Assembly to have begun discussing the selection of the next Secretary-General at this early stage in the process. Today's discussion will also serve as timely input for the consultations at the Security Council on the same matter. Transparency in the selection process of the Secretary-General is an issue of growing concern to many delegations.

Japan therefore welcomes this discussion in the General Assembly and thank you for organizing it. Likewise, we welcome the new practice whereby the Presidency of the Security Council regularly updates the President of the General Assembly on the progress of the consultations at the Council, which was introduced last month. We also welcome the message to this Ad Hoc Working Group meeting by the President of the Council of this month, Ambassador Wang of China, to brief the Member States on the state of consideration at the Council of this important issue.

Mr. Co-Chair,

Thirty-five years have passed since an Asian last served as UN Secretary-General. During this period, the many nations in the Asian region have undergone quite a remarkable political transformation and achieved spectacular economic and social development across the region, which was the most dramatic change in the world in that period. Through this development, governments and people in this region have come to have increased confidence, a desire, and the ability to contribute more to the collective good in the world. We believe that their self-confidence and aspirations are well grounded. The wish to have a person from this dynamic region serve, after more than thirty years of hiatus, in the highest office of the United Nations has long been a shared goal of the Asian region, which has now been formalized as an official position of the UN regional Asia Group.

When the Africa Group expressed its intention to promote an African Secretary-General in 1990, the Asia Group accepted that intention as a noble aspiration that was worthy of its support and expressed such support, knowing that the realization of the African aspiration would mean delaying its own wish to have an Asian Secretary-General for ten years or more. And indeed, for these fifteen years, the Asia Group has continuously and faithfully supported the two Secretary-Generals from Africa. Now, we Asian members of the Organization believe the moment has arrived to stake its claim that we have waited for some time.

The idea of supporting an Asian Secretary-General is not only that of the Asia Group but it is broadly supported or sympathetically viewed by Member States in other regional groups as well. The recent formal expression of support by the Africa Group in this respect is very much appreciated. Taking this opportunity, we reiterate our appeal to all Member States to support an Asian Secretary-General for the term 2007 to 2011.

Mr. Co-Chair,

It goes without saying that the challenges we face in selecting the next Secretary-General are formidable. First, he or she will need to possess strong leadership capabilities in order to carry through the on-going reform of the United Nations. Second, he or she will need to demonstrate superior political and diplomatic skills, with proven track record, to deal with multifaceted and complex issues and problems of today's world. Furthermore, the person must be someone who could restore confidence in the UN's damaged image and credibility in terms of its organizational management.

Whether a single person will be able to satisfy such diverse, challenging demands of the job, or these demands will have to be met through the appointment of an able deputy is a question worth considering. But it is in any case absolutely certain that, for the next Secretary-General, a person of very high quality who can meet the needs of a difficult age is required.

Japan is confident that the Asia region, which has gone through the remarkable development that I just mentioned, has a wealth of persons of high quality and caliber who could fulfill the aforementioned requirements. Already, a few distinguished candidates have started their campaigns. Many more could conceivably come forward in due course and declare their candidacy. We hope that Member States will consider the high qualifications of the existing and potential candidates and support the selection of an Asian to serve as the next Secretary-General.

Mr. Co-Chair,

As the selection process reaches a more substantial stage, it will become increasingly important for Member States to be fully aware of the qualifications of candidates, hence transparency in the process. This is a prerequisite for the full and firm support of the next Secretary-General, no matter who the successful candidate will be.

Japan believes it appropriate to devise some mechanism that serves this purpose, and we are open to any innovative ideas in that regard. For example, one possible way to enable Member States to familiarize themselves with the qualifications of each candidate might be to create an informal opportunity for the candidates to meet with members of each regional group and communicate their own visions for the future of the United Nations. There are several other suggestions put forward for Member States' consideration, some for immediate application and others for longer-term considerations. My delegation will consider them carefully and welcome engaging in discussions.