

10 September 1997

PRESS CONFERENCE BY DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF JAPAN

At a Headquarters press conference yesterday afternoon, members of the Democratic Party of Japan recounted highlights of a meeting they had held with Secretary-General Kofi Annan earlier in the day. Party co-leader Yukio Hatoyama spoke for the four other parliamentarians: Siji Maehara, Yukihisa Fujita, Mitsuhashi Warashina and Yukiko Kawahashi.

Mr. Hatoyama said that during their conversation with the Secretary-General, the Japanese parliamentarians had expressed concern about their Government's decision to reduce official development assistance (ODA). In the Democratic Party's opinion, the country's fiscal reform should first be directed towards cutting unnecessary domestic public works. Then, a hard look should be taken at bilateral aid before multilateral aid was reduced. The parliamentarians had told the Secretary-General that, in the future, Japan should increase its intellectual and human resources contributions to the Organization.

Next, Mr. Hatoyama described the points put forth by the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General had expressed gratitude for Japan's economic and humanitarian contributions, as well as its efforts in the spheres of human resources and peacekeeping operations. Mr. Hatoyama said the Secretary-General had mentioned Japan's desire for permanent membership in the Security Council, as well as the importance of the Organization's reform. In addition, the Secretary-General had noted that when difficulties with the United States' contributions seemed to be improving, it was disturbing that Japanese foreign aid was going to be cut. The Secretary-General had asked the parliamentarians to make efforts to have the Japanese Government change its decision on reducing ODA.

Mr. Hatoyama said that the group had then spoken for 45 minutes with Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Yasushi Akashi. Due to time constraints, however, he could not elaborate on that discussion.

In response to a question on whether the Democratic Party wanted a more senior role for Mr. Akashi and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, Mr. Hatoyama said the two were on the front lines of world affairs. Their efforts were a source of great pride for many Japanese citizens. He would like to see Japan exert greater diplomatic influence abroad, particularly regarding preventive diplomacy. In that area, he would want Mr. Akashi and Mrs. Ogata to contribute.

Asked about expansion of the Security Council, Mr. Hatoyama said that the views of the Japanese Government and the Democratic Party differed on the

(more)

matter. The Democratic Party's view was that permanent membership should be an objective, while seeking the understanding of neighbouring countries. He did not support the premise that Japan's financial contributions entitled it to permanent membership. Japan should try to build peace through diplomacy and methods other than the Council's traditional approaches.

A correspondent asked what the response had been to the Secretary-General's request for help in changing the Government's views on ODA. Mr. Hatoyama said his understanding was that the budget cuts announced by Japan's Government had reflected a policy statement rather than a final decision. The Democratic Party would attempt to change that policy. In the upcoming session of the national Diet, Democratic Party members would express their view that the United Nations budget should be increased, not reduced.

Next, Mr. Hatoyama was asked for his assessment of Japan's participation as a non-permanent member of the Council, and whether Japan had the support of neighbouring countries in its bid to become a permanent member. Mr. Hatoyama noted that Japan behaved in accordance with the interests of industrialized countries. As the only country to have suffered a nuclear attack, however, Japan should be more outspoken in abolishing nuclear weapons, he said.

The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries seemed to support Japan's bid for permanent membership, he said. The Republic of Korea did not support the effort. China had not expressed support, but had not come out with any definitive statement.

If Japan became a permanent member of the Council, should it be granted veto power? a correspondent asked. Mr. Hatoyama said the Party had not yet formulated an official view on the matter. His personal opinion was that exercise of the veto power should be limited because a veto supported the interests of one country, rather than the entire international community.

Mr. Fujita then drew correspondents' attention to copies of a speech Mr. Hatoyama would give to the Japan Society and the United Nations Association later in the evening. He also added information about the meeting with the Secretary-General. The Parliamentarians had presented the Secretary-General with a book entitled Not Mines but Flowers. A non-governmental organization in Japan had sold 190,000 copies of the book, from which \$6.00 per book would be directed towards clearing mines.

The Democratic Party had formed a group of Diet members to support a total ban of anti-personnel landmines, Mr. Fujita continued. That group had petitioned Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto to join the Ottawa Process without conditions and to destroy Japan's stockpile of mines.