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SEP 17 2015

15-08165

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Note to the Secretary-General
(Through the Deputy Secretary-General)

THE SECURITY LEGISLATION OF JAPAN

1. On 16 July, the lower house of the National Assembly of Japan (Diet) passed two bills amending the current security legislation. The upper house is expected to vote on the amendments as early as 18 September. With the adoption of these amendments, Japanese soldiers would be allowed to fight overseas for the first time since the end of the Second World War. More significantly, even if Japan or Japanese nationals are not under attack, Japan could exercise the right of collective self-defense, a right Japan abandoned after the end of World War II. The proposed new legislation is an essential part of Prime Minister Abe's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" policy.
2. Opposition parties question the constitutionality of the amendments, vehemently criticizing it as jeopardizing Japan's national interests. There have been mass demonstrations in Tokyo and other cities against the legislation. Although the Constitution is procedurally very difficult to amend, there have been changes to the interpretation of Article 9 several times in the past, which outlaws war as a means to settle disputes. The Self-Defense Force of Japan (SDF), as the *de facto* army, has undertaken a range of quasi-military activities overseas in United Nations peacekeeping operations and support to military operations of the United States.
3. Another key concern in Japan is the potential loss of life. While Japan has never lost the life of an SDF member in combat, the debate over the amendments revealed that since 2000, 54 SDF members suffered from post-war trauma and committed suicide as a result of deployments in Afghanistan, Iraq and in the Indian Ocean. As a result of the controversy, Prime Minister Abe's cabinet suffered a relatively low support rate when the lower house passed the bills.
4. The legislation has not been well received by China, which has voiced concerns, saying that this move was without precedent since the end of the Second World War. The Republic of Korea also expressed concerns, stating that measures that could affect the security of the Korea Peninsula and its national interests could not be implemented without its request or consent.
5. On the other hand, the United States fully supports the legislation as Japan would be able to actively contribute to military operations of the United States globally. Other US allies in the region also stand to benefit. In June, the navies of Japan and the Philippines started joint training at the east coast of the Philippines, alongside the joint military drill of the United States and the Philippines in the same area. The nature of such activities could change once the national law of Japan is amended.
6. For the United Nations, DPKO has held discussions with Japan on the possible implications of the legislation for Japanese contributions to peacekeeping. DPA will also explore the potential to leverage Japan's commitment to global peace through increasing Japan's engagement with DPA's conflict prevention efforts.

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Jeffrey Feltman
16 September 2015

POL/041001