Thank you chair, Director General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great honour for me to have this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of the Government of Japan at the International Labour Conference.

“End to Poverty” is one of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are also the theme of the Director-General’s report. And the ILO has advocated its Decent Work Agenda. To achieve these objectives, sustainable economic growth is essential.

After World War II, Japan achieved economic growth that brought us improved living standards and lifted the people out of poverty. However, we are now facing demographic challenges such as “declining population”, “declining LABOUR force”, “aging population” and “low birthrates”.

The Abe Cabinet is the first ever in Japan to resolutely address these tough demographic challenges. The essence of its policy will be to achieve a sustainable social and economic system where people can live with fair satisfaction by achieving strong economic growth and redistributing its fruits.

The Abe Cabinet will not agree with the dichotomy between growth and redistribution, but instead will propose a new model by creating a virtuous cycle of growth and redistribution in the face of declining population.

At the recent G7 Ise-Shima Summit, leaders reaffirmed the important role of mutually-reinforcing fiscal, monetary and structural policies to prevent the world economy from falling into another crisis. We will contribute to the world’s sustainable economic growth by taking best mix of such policies.
In order to achieve economic growth in spite of the demographic challenges, drastic industrial structural reform with continuous innovation is indispensable. The industrial structural reform will be realized by raising industries from low to higher productivity which inevitably necessitates labour mobility.

In addition, labour market structural reform including “women’s active participation”, “the elderly’s active participation” and “equal pay for equal work” is essential to realize the growth against those challenges.

The Abe Cabinet places the highest priority on facilitating women’s participation in the workplace. The “Law on Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace” obligates employers to establish numerical targets for women’s participation and to make their action plans for achieving those targets public. This will facilitate women’s participation in the workplace by accelerating employers’ efforts.

Then, in order to further promote active participation of elderly people, we will carry out the supportive measures for re-employment of elderlies through requiring enterprises to secure employment for employees who wish to continue to stay until the age of 65 and over and expansion of the scope of those eligible for employment insurance to employees of 65 years old and over.

Furthermore, in accordance with the fact that the non-standard workers including part-time workers are commonly found among females and the elderly, we will develop the society where their performance is evaluated appropriately based on “equal pay for equal work”.

New actions are now needed to realize new way of working. More specifically, reform of evaluation system that would be based on the achievements rather than the length of working hours is crucially important. The promotion of education and skill development, appropriate deployment of human resources in the labour market through encouragement of labour mobility, and measures to invite more skilled foreign workers are all equally necessary. I am sure that Japan’s labour market will be more attractive and fair by introducing these new policies.

Last year, we formulated “The Japan Vision: Health Care 2035” in anticipation of long-term vision of health care policy in two decades. Likewise, we are discussing “The Japan Vision: Future Work 2035” that envisions future way of
work in 20 years. We will pursue the society where flexible and diverse way of working can be accepted.

Japan will continue to share our experiences with the world in overcoming a large number of policy challenges in the past and upcoming major demographic challenges. We are also committed to continue extending to those countries which need the technical cooperation we have already been carrying out for many years.

Japan will contribute to an end to poverty in the world and to the promotion of decent work.

Lastly, I would like to highly appreciate Director-General Mr. Guy Ryder for his strong leadership and efforts to reform the ILO, and also extend my sincere support for his ILO Centenary Initiatives.

Thank you.