Statement made by Mr. Akira Isawa
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at the 104th Session of the International Labour Conference
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Madam Chairperson, Director General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a great honor for me to have this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of the Government of Japan at the 104th Session of the International Labour Conference.

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the strong leadership of the Director General, Mr. Guy Ryder, on the reform of the ILO, as well as “Centenary Initiatives” for the ILO’s 100th anniversary in 2019.

Madam Chairperson, as one of the original member states of the ILO since 1919, Japan has made efforts in cooperation with the ILO to encourage social justice and promote decent work for all.

However, among our predecessors who created the ILO nearly 100 years ago, who could have predicted today’s drastically changed world of work?
Today’s world of work is facing various challenges including rising unemployment, growing poverty and inequality, expanding non-standard forms of employment, the informal economy, and the negative impact of intense global competition.

In this context, what challenges should the ILO and its constituents address, and how should it do so, toward another centenary of the ILO? That is, in our view, the question which the Director General has posed to us in his report.

Madam Chairperson, I believe that it is the very mission for us gathered here today to overcome these challenges and explore the positive possibilities for the future of work.

Yet, mere efforts made by each member state cannot necessarily bring about overall solutions to these global challenges. It is the ILO that should play a leading role to cope with these challenges, placing emphasis on the importance of tripartism, which has been part of the inborn spirit of the ILO since its foundation.

In this regard, Japan strongly supports the future of work initiatives initiated by the strong leadership of the Director General.
We also welcome the suggestion in the report that the Conference adopt a solemn “Centenary Declaration”. It seems timely to reconsider the role of the ILO toward the next centenary based on the discussion on the future of work initiatives. However, as the report mentions, this Declaration should not be symbolic or ceremonial but it should be substantive enough to provide us a clear vision and guidance.

Madam Chairperson, Japan has been undertaking the reform of our employment system under the growth strategy called Abenomics advocated by Prime Minister Abe.

In order to achieve sustainable growth against the backdrop of globalization and rapid demographic change, employment policies are required to be “growth-oriented.”

To this end, we need to create working environments in which everyone including women, elderly people and young people can make the most of their abilities to work. In this way, one of the priorities of the Japanese policy agenda is to build a society in which everyone can participate and to which everyone can contribute. This is the key issue for the future of work in Japan.
Madam Chairperson, against the backdrop of the changing world of work, the presence of the ILO, which aims to promote social justice, should be enhanced all the more in the next centenary of the ILO.

I would like to end my speech by confirming that the Government of Japan fully supports the important activities of the ILO, and we again endorse the Director General’s initiatives for the ILO centenary.

Thank you very much.