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The Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and, with reference to the latter's note verbale REFERENCE: 2010DSLO dated 5 February 2010, has the honour to transmit herewith the answers to the questionnaire on good practices related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation from the Government of Japan according to Human Rights Council Resolution 7/22.

The Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 25 June 2010

Enclosure mentioned.



Reply to the Questionnaire

‘Good Practices’ related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation

(The Government of Japan)

Description of the practice

Although it is difficult to describe a good practice from “a human rights perspective” under Japan’s stable situation, the government of Japan describes examples as follows in accordance with the ten defined criteria.

1. How does the practice meet the criterion of availability?

As water is essential to people’s lives, it is necessary to ensure safe and stable supply of water. The total volume of water needed is approximately 16 billion cubic meters per year and Japan has the high level of water supply coverage of 97.4% (as of March 2008). In order to supply safe water to all citizens, however, it is an urgent issue to supply water to those in uncovered areas. In addition, efforts are being made to realize the “Waterworks Vision”, which was formulated in June 2004 and revised in July 2008, so that safe and high quality water can be stably supplied in the future through coping with issues such as the full implementation of water quality management, measures against disasters including earthquakes, and improved managerial bases. In addition, it is recommended that water suppliers formulate a “Local Waterworks Vision”.

2. How does the practice meet the criterion of accessibility?

Please refer to the answers to the question 1.

3. How does the practice meet the criterion of affordability?

Please refer to the answers to the question 1.

In this connection, fees of water differ by every water-supply corporation administering a water service business. That is because the expense of water-supply varies, depending on the distance from the water-source, the quality of raw water, and the installation time of the water service.

4. How does the practice meet the criterion of quality/safety?

- Water works

Water utility companies which are authorized under the Water Works Act supply water that meets the standards for drinking water quality set forth in the same act. As of the end of Fiscal Year 2007, 97.4% of Japan’s population was supplied with such water.

In addition, the Government subsidizes the construction and operation of water works such as area-wide water systems, which tend to be exceptionally costly because of their nature and large scale.

- Sewerage

Under the Sewerage Act, local governments such as municipal authorities (cities, towns and villages) and prefectures are responsible for the construction, and maintenance of sewerage facilities. Sewers support environmental hygiene by draining waste water from households and industries quickly. The Sewerage Act prescribes that waste water should be treated by sewage purification plants to preserve the quality of public bodies of water.

Sewers also drain storm water and protect urban areas from being damaged by flooding.

The Government provides local governments with financial and technical assistance for the construction of sewerage facilities because the construction of such facilities is expensive.

5. How does the practice meet the criterion of acceptability?

N/A

6. How does the practice ensure non-discrimination?

Although the above-mentioned criterion is not clear, the equality for people is guaranteed by relevant acts in Japan.

7. How does the practice ensure active, free and meaningful participation?

N/A

8. How does the practice ensure accountability?

N/A

9. What is the impact of the practice?

N/A

10. Is the practice sustainable?

- Appropriate Maintenance/Management of Water Supply Facilities

Considering that the level required of water services is getting very high including advances in water quality management, aging facilities and their renewal, environmental measures, and measures against disasters and terrorism, on-site investigations have been conducted at water suppliers to identify whether appropriate management is being implemented or not. In FY 2008 on-site

investigations were conducted at 58 water suppliers and written administrative guidance was made in 42 cases, according to consistency with the law, for which reports were submitted on the status with improvement.

Final remarks, challenges, lessons learnt

- Measures against Disasters including Earthquakes and Risk Management Measures

In order to secure a stable water supply for people, even in times of natural disasters including earthquakes or in emergency cases such as water quality accidents, water suppliers are expected to secure the safety of core water supply facilities and have a prompt recovery system ready.

Considering that water supply facilities also suffered great damage in the Noto-Hanto Earthquake of March 2007 and Niigata Chuetsu-oki Earthquake of July 2007, an Ordinance of the Ministry on technical standards for water supply facilities was revised to clarify the earthquake-resistant functions that water supply facilities should provide in promoting measures against earthquakes. Since Water supply facilities also suffered great damage in the Iwate-Miyaginairiku Earthquake of June 2008, efforts are being made to promote measures to systematically improve the earthquake-resistance of existing water supply facilities. In addition, in response to the great damages to people's lives and the economy caused by the water supply being cut off for a long time because of excessive processing capacity caused by increased turbidity of raw water in Kitami City of Hokkaido in June 2007, it was ensured that the recurrence of such accidents would not happen through training for water service technological managers and national directors meetings at health, labour and welfare bureaus. Regarding risk management measures, guidance is being given to individual water suppliers in establishing a risk management system that includes measures against natural disasters and terrorism using a "Guidelines for Formulating Risk Management Measures Manual".

To ensure a stable water supply is in place in the case of an outbreak of new influenza, in October 2007, measures to be taken by water suppliers were compiled in the "Guideline for New Influenza Preparedness at Waterworks" which was revised in July 2008, and disseminated.