



## **Defeating dementia: progress and challenges on the road to 2025**

London, 5 December 2018

Speech by

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On behalf of Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations for the fifth anniversary of the World Dementia Council.

In Japan, the number of older adults with dementia is rapidly increasing along with the population aging. That's estimated to be 7 million in 2025, which will be equal to about 20% of the population aged 65 and over. Given this situation, Government of Japan launched a comprehensive strategy, called "New Orange Plan", in 2015. This plan is aiming for a society where persons with dementia can live with dignity in a familiar environment, in other word, "Dementia-Friendly Community". It's a national strategy prepared by 12 related ministries and agencies including our ministry.

New Orange Plan consists of 7 pillars. Today I'd like to briefly introduce 3 of them and some measures under those pillars to you.

First pillar is "raising awareness and promoting understanding of dementia". There are more than 10 million "Dementia Supporters" who have proper knowledge of dementia and can give a hand to persons with dementia in their community as much as they can. Our next plan is to encourage those Dementia Supporters to play a more active role in the community. We are now planning to set up "Step-up Program" for those who are willing to support persons with dementia, and make necessary arrangements to assist them in giving daily support such as to accompany persons with dementia when they go out.

Second, we promote “research and development”. With close collaboration with other ministries and research agencies such as AMED, Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development, we are promoting R&D of prevention, diagnosis, cure, rehabilitation model, and care model for dementia.

Third point, which is the most important one, is “prioritizing the standpoint of persons with dementia and their families”. Recently, in Japan, the persons with dementia become more and more active to speak out about their situation. In November this year, Japan Dementia Working Group released “Declaration to live well with dementia”. It’s a message “to all the people from ‘us’ who were diagnosed with dementia a little sooner than you”, followed by 5 statements;

1. We live positive life without being bound by conventional common sense.
2. We continue to make use of our ability, cherish our daily life and enjoy challenges as a part of society.
3. We meet together and connect with each other to encourage living longer happily.
4. We spread our idea and hope to find friends and supporters who live together in our community.
5. We work together to make cities more comfortable for everyone by making best use of our knowledge and experiences as persons living with dementia.

By listening to the voices of persons with dementia, we have come to realize that they hope to participate and play some roles in the society even after diagnosed with dementia. Now in Japan, there are many good examples of grass-roots activities to promote social participation by persons with dementia. Peer support among persons with dementia is one of those activities. Furthermore, they are doing voluntary work or paid work in the community such as watching over children commuting to school and part-time job by a small group like washing cars at a car dealership. We collected information about those good practices and made a booklet to disseminate all over the country how to arrange the places for persons with dementia where they can play an active part in the society.

As the population of older persons is still on the rise in Japan, we have to reform our working style to overcome labor shortage in the near future. I believe that those advanced practices should establish a

good precedent in order to realize the society where all the people can play active roles in the society regardless of their age as well as their diseases or disabilities.

Next year, in 2019, G20 meetings will be held in Japan. The issues related to the aging of society is also considered to be discussed in the meetings. We are delighted to share our experiences and contribute toward realization of “Dementia-Friendly Community” in the world. Thank you.