

**Welcome Remarks by the Minister of Justice
at the World Congress for Community Volunteers
Supporting Offender Reintegration**

Distinguished participants,

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to all of you joining from across the globe. I am KAMIKAWA Yoko, the Minister of Justice of Japan.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the very first “World Congress for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration”, on the opening day of the Kyoto Congress.

This World Congress is the first international conference to bring together community volunteers and practitioners supporting offender reintegration from around the world.

Before this World Congress, we hosted two “Asia Volunteer Probation Officers Meetings” in Tokyo in 2014 and 2017.

Building on the success of these meetings, this Congress aims at bringing countries together and discussing core values of such community volunteers as well as ways to promote such

systems throughout the world.

Unfortunately, many offences are committed by repeated offenders. So, reducing reoffending is extremely important to realize a safe and secure society.

To do so, it is necessary that the community understands the efforts of repeat offenders to take on new challenges in their life.

To raise awareness of the community, community volunteers' role is critical. They strive to build a rehabilitative environment in the community.

In this respect, let me briefly touch upon Japan's practice.

Japan's offender rehabilitation system has its origin in grass-roots efforts by community volunteers, which actually started more than 130 years ago.

Ever since, it has developed with tremendous efforts of our forerunners. And now, it has become an indispensable part of our criminal justice.

Among community volunteers, *HOGOSHI*, carry very positive impact on offender reintegration. *HOGOSHI* are community volunteers who help probationers reintegrate into society in collaboration with government probation officers.

They stand side-by-side with offenders from the perspective of a good neighbor. They are unpaid volunteers, offering necessary support to offenders.

The goal of SDGs, *Leave no one behind*” resonates with the spirit of *HOGOSHI* and other community volunteers.

I would like to note the Kyoto Declaration, adopted this morning, is the first declaration that highlights *multi-stakeholder partnerships* in reducing reoffending.

I hope that the Kyoto Declaration and *Kyoto HOGOSHI Declaration*, which are to be adopted at this World Congress will be a historic point of departure to expand the circle of community volunteers – our human treasure – throughout the world.

I thank you very much.