



(Check Against Delivery)

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Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to express my warmest congratulations to Your Excellency, of Moldova, on your election as the Chair of the 56th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD). Also, I would like to share with you and all those gathered here the joy of meeting in person, face-to-face, after three long years of online communication due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The theme of this year's CPD, "Population, education and sustainable development", is especially relevant in the context of COVID-19, when many schools were forced to close, limiting the human interactions among students and teachers, which hinders the development of young persons' mental, physical, and social capacities. Although digital learning platforms have drastically improved during the Pandemic, we are reminded that education is a field where new technologies cannot totally replace traditional modes of interpersonal communication.

Japan has a shrinking population. The number of students in all schools from kindergartens to universities has declined from 28 million in 1984 to 18 million in 2022. Regardless of this decline, education is a high-priority national policy, and the quality of education should never be compromised. N

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