

Message from the Minister of Justice
"Reducing reoffending by multi-stakeholder
partnerships—a successful practice towards the
achievement of the SDGs"

I am KAMIKAWA Yoko, the Minister of Justice of Japan.

There are only 17 days left until the Kyoto Congress.

Today, I would like to talk about one of the four workshop topics that will be discussed at the Kyoto Congress, that is “reducing reoffending”, by sharing the example of Japan’s offender rehabilitation system through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

In order to reduce reoffending, it is important to provide counseling and other support for ex-offenders as well as secure housing and employment. In delivering such support, the private sector and community volunteers play a great role.

Securing the housing will be the first step to social reintegration for offenders upon their release. In Japan, “offender rehabilitation facilities” provide housing for many released offenders. These facilities are run by

private organizations in the community. They provide temporary residences while released offenders search for more permanent housing. Offender rehabilitation facilities function as a bridge between released offenders and the community. They are indispensable private-sector partners for reducing reoffending.

Securing employment is another essential element. In Japan, there are many employers called “cooperating employers” who willingly employ offenders. Their support is important for the offenders to live independently in society. Despite facing challenges with these employees, for example, when they took absence without leave or caused trouble with co-workers, cooperating employers have still trusted them and continued employing them. They too are also indispensable private partners for reducing reoffending.

In addition, volunteer probation officers have been playing an essential role in Japan’s offender rehabilitation system. Japan’s offender rehabilitation system started more than 130 years ago by community volunteers. These citizen volunteers who support

offender rehabilitation in the community together with governmental probation officers are called “*HOGOSHI*”. “*HOGOSHI*” accept probationers and parolees as neighbors, provide them with empathetic care, consultation and advice standing on their side, and help them lead their lives without reoffending.

While the “*HOGOSHI*” system has taken root and developed in Japan, I am confident its values and approach are universal and applicable for other countries as well. In fact, Japan has supported the Philippines and Kenya in introducing the “*HOGOSHI*” system. At the Kyoto Congress, Japan will be organizing an ancillary meeting with these countries and others having similar community volunteer systems and practices the “World Congress for Community Volunteers Supporting Offender Reintegration”.

“Offender rehabilitation facilities”, cooperating employers and “*HOGOSHI*” are successful examples of multi-stakeholder partnerships in reducing reoffending. The offender rehabilitation system of Japan cannot stand without such multi-stakeholder partnership.

Multi-stakeholder partnership, enshrined in Goal 17 of the SDGs, is the key for social reintegration of offenders and reducing reoffending, and the wider agenda of achieving a society where “no one will be left behind.”

I am looking forward to having in-depth discussions with participants from around the world on offender rehabilitation in Kyoto and to achieve a society in which no one is left behind.