

Global Health Vision of
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of
Japan

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1 Purpose and Objectives of the "Global Health Vision"

(1) Realization of the mission of the MHLW

Promoting global health efforts will not only benefit the international community but also help resolve domestic issues and lead to promoting health and well-being in Japan.

The concept of global health has become firmly established as it is recognized that a wide range of stakeholders, including national governments, international organizations, private sectors including businesses, academic institutions, NGOs and civil society groups, need to work together across borders in a multilayered manner to address factors that affect health and well-being domestically and globally.

Global health is one of the most important issues for the international community, not only because it is directly related to health and well-being, but also because it affects the peace and prosperity of nations and, moreover, from the perspective of coexistence of human society and the Earth. The promotion of global health is not only of public health significance, but also of great importance from the perspective of diplomacy, economy, and security, as well as stability of the international community, protecting the people and contributing to health and well-being in Japan.

In the 21st century, international collaboration has become indispensable in a wide range of global health issues, including response to infectious diseases such as pandemics and drug resistance (Antimicrobial Resistance: AMR), pharmaceutical development, training and securing health workforce, and addressing the impact of climate change on health. Furthermore, with the rapid increase in the importance of digitization and data science in the health, medical, and long-term care fields, international collaboration is becoming increasingly important in promoting various reforms in the health, medical, and long-term care sectors.

The mission of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) is "to improve and promote social welfare, social security, and public health, to improve working conditions and other working environments for workers, and to secure jobs, in order to guarantee and improve the lives of the people and contribute to economic development" (Act for Establishment of the MHLW). In order to fulfill this mission, the MHLW needs to address global health while moving beyond its traditional inward-looking perspective.

In this century, global and domestic health issues, including COVID-19 and AMR,

have become closely linked to each other. The MHLW's active involvement and efforts in global health will contribute to "guaranteeing and improving the lives of the people" and "improving and promoting social welfare, social security, and public health", and will help protect the people.

(2) Contributing Japan's Insights to the International Community

The MHLW has extensive knowledge and trial-and-error experiences in achieving one of the highest levels of health and longevity in the world, while ensuring equity and maintaining relatively low costs. For example, the MHLW has introduced the national health insurance system in 1961, and this can be considered "Japan's version of universal health coverage (UHC)." Moreover, the Ministry has also worked on ensuring access to health care, tackling infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, promoting health through "Health Japan 21," addressing elderly care through long-term care insurance and dementia measures, and integrating health care and welfare services through "Community-Based Integrated Care System."

Furthermore, Japan's experience in ongoing maintenance and management of one of the highest health standards in the world has contributed significantly to the country's economic development. As the super-aged society, it is vital that health, medical, and long-term care policies will be addressed as part of economic and industrial policies in cooperation with relevant ministries and agencies.

Leveraging these knowledge and experiences in health systems and health financing can benefit the international community, and it will also contribute to solving future challenges within our own country.

The Government of Japan released "Global Health Strategy of Japan" (approved by the Headquarters for Healthcare Policy of Japan on May 24, 2022) to outline its direction for contributing to the international community. Nonetheless, since then, new conflicts, disasters, and extreme weather events have occurred, and there have been geopolitical changes due to the increasing presence of emerging and developing countries in the Global South.

This vision, while aligning with the "Global Health Strategy of Japan," aims to clarify the role of MHLW within the overall government strategy, taking into account the changes mentioned above.

2 Current Status and Issues

Previous Japan's perspective

Japan has promoted global health based on the concept of human security, in which each individual pursues the right to dignity and survival. On this basis, it is internationally recognized that the achievement of UHC has been positioned at the center of Japan's health diplomacy. Especially in recent years, Japan has been calling the world's attention to the importance of finance and health coordination in strengthening national health systems to achieve UHC, as well as the need to design a sustainable health financing system. For example, Japan hosted the G20 Joint Finance and Health Ministers' Meeting for the first time at G20 Osaka Summit in 2019, and this practice has been followed in subsequent G20 summits.

Challenges in light of the COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the vulnerabilities of the current global health governance and financing, with the World Health Organization (WHO) at its center. As a lesson learned from this pandemic, lively discussions are now underway among international community on the need to build a Global Health Architecture (GHA) aimed at strengthening Prevention, Preparedness, and Response (PPR) for future pandemics.

At the same time, the experience of COVID-19 has the necessity of building a resilient health system, as advocated globally, from the viewpoint of effective response to health crises. To strengthen responses to future pandemics, it is crucial to enhance health systems based on the concept of human security, particularly by improving health financing. Achieving UHC globally is fundamental to protecting people's health.

With declaration of a state of Emergency in response to COVID-19 lifted and lessons of the pandemic gradually fading, the momentum for strengthening PPR through the establishment of a GHA and for achieving UHC is waning. The world has repeatedly experienced "panic and neglect" with each successive pandemic. To avoid repeating the same mistake after the COVID-19, Japan has been determined to keep contributing to the achievement of UHC.

Complex global challenges confronting humanity

The world continues to face ongoing infectious disease, such as HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis, and malaria, as well as longstanding issues like vaccination and

maternal and child health. In addition to these issues, over the past decade, new and diverse challenges have emerged simultaneously. For example, there are emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases such as COVID-19, the direct and indirect health impacts of climate change, AMR, the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health conditions globally, and the various challenges associated with an aging population, including dementia. There are also frequent conflicts and disasters to be addressed.

Above all, the health impacts of climate change extend beyond direct factors such as heatstroke and floods. It also alters the distribution of infectious diseases like malaria, affects food security through its impact on agriculture and livestock, causes rural depopulation and urban slum growth due to large-scale population movements, and increases the risk of zoonotic disease outbreaks due to wildfire migration. The effects on global health, including Japan, are extensive.

Furthermore, one of the significant issues related to new global complex challenges is the aging population, which is highly relevant to Japan. Currently, Japan has an aging rate, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over, of around 30 percent, making it the most aged country in the world. Aging is expected to continue to progress, with the aging rate projected to reach nearly 40 percent by the middle of this century. The responses required include not only maintaining social security systems such as health insurance, long-term care insurance, and pension systems but also addressing health issues that couple with aging population, such as, but not limited to, dementia and mobility impairments. These responses extend beyond the health sector to include maintaining overall societal vitality. As global aging progresses, the world is paying close attention to Japan's approach to addressing this issue.

To date, various funding mechanisms have been established to address specific health challenges, such as The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and CEPI (for vaccines), Global Financing Facility (for maternal and child health), and the Pandemic Fund (for health crises). However, addressing new and diverse health challenges through such individual mechanisms alone can lead to overlap, fragmentation, and sustainability issues. To respond to diversification of global health challenges, efforts should be accelerated to strengthen health systems with a common approach aimed at achieving resilient and sustainable UHC.

Moreover, since the "Global Health Strategy" was released in 2022, geopolitical

risks have increased, including Russia's aggression against Ukraine as well as the situation surrounding Israel and Palestine worsening since terror attacks on Israel by Hamas and others in 2023. On the first day of this year 2024, the Noto Peninsula earthquake occurred in Japan, resulting in the loss of lives and significant damage. In the affected areas, the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19, influenza, and norovirus infections, further complicated the situation, making it crucial to ensure medical care systems, stable supply of pharmaceuticals, infection control, and support for the health of the elderly. Furthermore, large-scale movements of refugees due to climate change are anticipated in the future, increasing the need for humanitarian assistance, including health care needs.

Japan is one of the countries with the most extensive knowledge in the field of Disaster Risk Management (DRM) because of its numerous domestic experiences with disasters, and there is a significant potential for contributing to global efforts. Various global health challenges threatening people's lives and health are not limited to developing countries; their impacts also affect Japan directly and indirectly. As Japan continues to contribute in areas where it has deep expertise, such as promoting UHC, DRM, and aging issues, the MHLW will keep to contribute to the international community.

The United Nations' Special Report on Human Security

Since 2002, Japan has advocated for human security by combining human empowerment and human protection, using a community-based approach to address individual security from a micro perspective. Over the past two decades, while technological advancements supporting human security have accelerated, risks such as climate change and pandemics have also become more severe.

Consequently, there has been a recognition of the need to consider human security from a macro perspective in addition to this micro approach. In 2022, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) released the "Special Report on Human Security." This report emphasizes the importance of addressing human security and health challenges by analyzing the causal relationship between global changes and health risks, implementing measures, and conducting risk management to achieve "coexistence between humanity and the planet." It also underscores the necessity for cross-border "solidarity."

The new "soft governance approach" and UHC

Meanwhile, we are facing serious geopolitical conflicts, making consensus-building between nations increasingly difficult. In such international political circumstances, the desired outcomes may not be achieved by solely relying on interstate agreements in the health sector. Instead, setting achievable goals and having sovereign nations, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders, including private sectors, collaborate towards common goals – essentially employing a “soft governance approach” – is likely to be more effective in advancing global health.

To address global health challenges using a soft governance approach and setting realistic goals, the primary proposal should be to aim for achieving resilient and sustainable UHC worldwide. Specifically, this involves expanding health financing in low- and middle-income countries (LIMCs) and strengthening health systems, including achieving sustainable health financing through stable domestic financial resources.

As a part of this effort, Japan is currently working toward establishing a "global hub function on UHC" with the cooperation of many countries and relevant organizations. This hub function, which is being developed in collaboration with international organization such as WHO, the World Bank is expected to truly embody the soft governance approach in global health. Through this hub function, discussions on achieving UHC globally and strengthening efforts should be advanced.

Importance of the Indo-Pacific region

In light of the geopolitical situation surrounding our country, Japan places a strong emphasis on collaboration with Indo-Pacific countries, including those in Asia, in the health sector. Aging is also progressing in Asian countries, and changes in disease structures and widening health disparities will become significant challenges. Having a pioneered the experience of rapid population aging and low fertility, Japan possesses a wealth of knowledge and experience in the fields of medical care, long-term care, and welfare, and can contribute in various ways, such as but not limited to transfer of clinical technologies in NCDs.

The Government of Japan has developed the “Basic Principles of the Asian Health and Wellbeing Initiative,” (approved by the Headquarters for Healthcare Policy of Japan on July 29, 2016) and the “Basic Principles of the Africa Health and Wellbeing Initiative” (approved by the Headquarters for Healthcare Policy of Japan on June 20,

2019), with a focus on contributing to the achievement of UHC. Based on the principles, Japan has been promoting the “Asian Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN) and the Africa Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AfHWIN), with the aim of achieving both healthy living and economic growth in aging Asia, and in Africa, which is experiencing rapid population growth and achieving high economic growth, through mutually beneficial cooperation as a basic approach. In addition, Japan has been engaged in efforts to enable Asia to foster a socially and economically vibrant, healthy, and long-lived society through various forms of support including financial contributions to the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) in the health sector.

As emerging and developing countries, often referred to as the Global South, increase their presence, Japan has recognized the importance of strengthening engagement not only with the existing multi-lateral framework such as G7 and G20, but also with other international partners. It is crucial to adopt a detailed approach that responds to the various needs of these countries. In advancing these efforts, Japan emphasizes the importance of centering on "people" and upholding human dignity and human security. It remains essential to further strengthen public-private partnerships in the field of health, medical care, and long-term care in Indo-Pacific region, including those in Asia, and the MHLW needs to establish the organizational capacity to support these efforts in cooperation with relevant ministries and agencies.

Utilization of innovative technologies

The field of health, medical care, and long-term care are rapidly advancing due to digitization and data science. The utilization of such innovative technologies is enabling initiatives that can significantly contribute to achieving UHC and PPR. The Indo-Pacific region, including the Asian countries mentioned above, is no exception.

A strong international public-private partnership in digitalization and data science is crucial for advancing health, medical care, and long-term care in this region, including Japan. It is essential to consider the ongoing efforts to develop digitalization and data science system in these fields domestically in an integrated manner. It is also important to advance initiatives using Japan’s innovative technologies while keeping in mind the goal of translating the outcomes of these efforts into domestic technology development and problem-solving.

3 Policy Goals and Basic Policies

(1) Policy Goals

The "Global Health Strategy of Japan" released in 2022 set to develop and promote the following policy goals:

- To contribute to developing a resilient Global Health Architecture toward international health security and strengthen prevention, preparedness and response (PPR) for pandemics and other public health emergencies, and;
- To achieve more resilient, more equitable and more sustainable universal health coverage (UHC) required for post-pandemic era by strengthening health systems in each country, with a view to realizing human security.

The Strategy also presents its guiding principles as follows.

- To realize adequate prevention and preparedness in peace time as well as rapid response in emergency, strengthening international coordination and finance mechanisms is essential; and
- In accelerating its efforts to achieve UHC, (1) health system strengthening at the country level, (2) resilience, (3) equity, and (4) sustainability should be taken into consideration.

These policy goals and guiding principles will be adopted and further promoted in this Global Health Vision of the MHLW.

(2) Basic Policy

Based on these policy goals and the current situation, the MHLW has set out the basic policy for its global health initiatives as outlined below.

- Focusing on human security and coexistence between humanity and the planet – planetary health, ensuring global safety, prosperity, and values.
- Recognizing that ensuring health and safety in the international community contributes to safeguarding life of people and enhancing social welfare, social security and public health, which are in line with missions of the MHLW.
- In particular, to strengthen GHA for health security and contribute to achieving UHC,
- Sharing and utilizing extensive knowledge and experience of the MHLW on health care, medical care, and social welfare with other countries, contributing to

improving the health and well-being, and safety of people worldwide.

- Establishing a positive cycle in better health and well-being that links Japan and international community, and utilizing the insights and knowledge gained from international cooperation and exchange to international community.

To advance our response in accordance with the above basic policy, the MHLW will implement the following measures.

- The MHLW will develop fundamental policies for each issue and target set at international conferences, and coordinate with relevant domestic and international organizations. This includes rule-making and international standardization, aiming to contribute to the global health
- In addition, the MHLW will regularly work on maintaining and expanding international networks, gathering information, and building a foundation for coordination. It will also strategically utilize, develop, protect, and support global health professionals.
- For the time being, key focus areas will include UHC, international drug development, the Indo-Pacific Health Strategy, and responses to health emergencies such as infectious diseases.

4 Specific Initiatives

(1) Establishment of the "UHC Knowledge Hub"

① Purpose

Based on the idea of human security, there is a need to strengthen national health systems to achieve more resilient, equitable, and sustainable UHC worldwide. Since Japan has been actively promoting UHC globally for many years, Japan, together with the World Bank and WHO, will establish a "UHC Knowledge Hub" in Japan in 2025. The Hub will support knowledge sharing on UHC as well as capacity building for finance and health authorities. It will leverage the expertise of the World Bank and WHO, while drawing on Japan's experience, such as our efforts to maintain quality UHC amid an aging and declining population. Ultimately, serving as the Hub will aim to be a driving force for UHC in collaboration with various international organizations and stakeholders.

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WHO and the World Bank will jointly offer support for capacity building with policymakers and practitioners in health and finance ministries in LIMCs by providing training and expert consultation on health financing. In addition, while utilizing existing global information and analysis on UHC, the Hub will advise on policy options related to UHC and generate new data and evidence necessary to address the financing gap. To promote UHC and to strengthen health system resilience, it will focus on basic health finance as well as financing other emerging and critical health issues.

The Government of Japan will support the activities of WHO and the World Bank by providing necessary human resources and financial contributions, while offering insights based on Japan's experience with UHC-related areas, such as health care and long-term care systems. WHO and the World Bank will collaborate by leveraging their respective strengths in data, information, and capacity building, and will further develop training programs and curricula.

In addition, the Government of Japan, in collaboration with WHO and the World Bank, will involve multiple stakeholders, including other international financial institutions, international health-related organizations, bilateral aid agencies, the private sector, and relevant regional offices and organizations - such as WHO regional offices - to promote broad engagement, dialogue, and capacity building on UHC.

③ Timeline

The UHC Knowledge Hub, staffed by experts from WHO and World Bank, will be established in Tokyo area. In preparation for the establishment of the WHO Office in FY2026, a preparatory organization will be set up in FY2025. The Hub will consist of a "WHO Office in Tokyo Area (tentative name)," "WB Tokyo UHC Team (tentative name)," and a coordinating body that will manage its operations.

(2) International Strategy for Strengthening Drug Discovery Infrastructure

① Purpose

As new modalities such as next-generation biopharmaceuticals become mainstream of drug discovery, the need to collaborate with global public-private partnerships, rather than domestic ones, is increasing for the "ecosystem" involved in drug discovery. Japan has pioneering research in academia, including universities, startup companies, advanced medical institutions capable of conducting clinical trials, and pharmaceutical manufacturers with a large pool of human resources and capital.

Japan has the potential to create the groundbreaking new drugs if it can strengthen its research and development capabilities for drug discovery seeds from a global ecosystem perspective and become a cornerstone of global drug discovery. This would require building effective relationships of cooperation and coordination among these stakeholders.

To strengthen drug discovery capabilities, it is important to build an ecosystem that supports the establishment and growth of startup companies through mutual cooperation among entrepreneurs, academia, government, and investors.

From this perspective, by attracting human resources and funding to Japan through international collaboration, we aim to revitalize the drug discovery ecosystem by facilitating the transition from research to development and reconstruct the foundation of drug discovery in Japan.

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The MHLW will take the lead in introducing a new industrial policy to strengthen the drug discovery infrastructure through public-private collaboration. The policy aims to participate in the international drug discovery ecosystem and leverage human and capital resources in Japan and abroad. The four main points are as follows.

- i. With the aim of becoming a part of the international drug discovery ecosystem, we will take a global approach and collaborate with top-notch human resources, facilities, and companies across the world.
- ii. To enhance Japan's attractiveness as a base, we will establish a center equipped with laboratory and hospital functions, where specialists can interact.
- iii. To bridge the gap between basic research and clinical trials, we will secure human resources and equipment to support the initial drug discovery process, train biotechnicians, and develop facilities for GMP¹ manufacturing.
- iv. We will provide grants for basic research and development closely linked to drug discovery from the outset, while collaborating with both the public and private sectors.

③ Timeline

We will implement various measures based on the "Strategic Goal and Action Plan for Improving Drug Discovery Capabilities to Support Early Availability of Innovative

¹ Abbreviation for Good Manufacturing Practice

Drug -Toward Implementation of the Interim Report-."

(3) Strengthen collaboration between the Japan Institute for Health Security (JIHS) and the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED)

① Purpose

Regional collaboration is essential for the prevention, preparedness, and response to health crises, and the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) is expected to play an important role as a center for health crisis response within ASEAN.

As part of efforts to fully prepare for the next infectious disease crisis, the Japan Institute for Health Security (JIHS), to be established through the merger of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases and the National Center for Global Health and Medicine, will serve as a key expert organization. It will provide high-quality scientific knowledge to the Cabinet Agency for Infectious Disease Crisis Management and the MHLW. The JIHS is expected to enhance the system for centralized collection, management, and evaluation of necessary information from international and foreign public health organizations and act as a hub for networking with these organizations.

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We will continue to cooperate with relevant organizations for the smooth operation of the ACPHEED. By promoting the dispatch of experts from Japan, we aim to enhance the exchange of specialized personnel between the two organizations and strengthen the collaboration between the JIHS and ACPHEED during ordinary times.

In the report of the "Toward the Establishment of the Japan Institute for Health Security: For the realization of a society free from concern of infectious diseases" (Approved by the Preparatory Committee of the Japan Institute for Health Security, April 9, 2024; hereinafter referred to as the "2024 Report"), a blueprint for the JIHS with strengthened governance was developed and preparations are steadily underway for the establishment of the JIHS in April 2025.

Based on the 2024 Report and other relevant documents, we will accelerate the review and development of organizational regulations, including employment rules and salary regulations that consider international exchange. We will advance efforts to make the JIHS a hub for both domestic and international networks. In addition, the

JIHS will work closely with the MHLW, Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA), ACPHEED, and other relevant organizations to strengthen the information collection and analysis system for infectious diseases, develop and secure human resources for responding to infectious disease crises, and establish a comprehensive research and development infrastructure from basic research to clinical trials. We will continue to explore specific measures to enhance all functions required of JIHS.

(4) Building an Indo-Pacific Health Strategy

In order to further strengthen cooperation in the field of health, medical care and long-term care with Asian and Indo-Pacific countries, Japan should take the lead in developing an Indo-Pacific health strategy based on cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including Asia.

Specifically, the "Ecosystem for the Development of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices" with Asian countries and Indo-Pacific countries, the Cyclical Elderly Health Strategy, which involves the utilization of foreign human resources in the long-term care and other fields and support for the international expansion of long-term care providers, as well as the international expansion of medical care will be promoted.

(4-1) Development of "Ecosystem for Development of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices"

① Purpose

Access to essential medicines and medical devices is an important element of UHC in the context of the SDGs. Japan needs to contribute to improving health in other countries, including Asian countries, through enhancing access to medicines and medical devices in these regions. Under various government initiatives², efforts have been made to improve patient's accessibility to medicines and medical devices in Asian countries with UHC in mind by harmonizing pharmaceutical regulations and developing clinical development systems.

Regarding the harmonization of pharmaceutical regulations, the Asia Training Center for Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Regulatory Affairs (PMDA-ATC) was

² Under the "Basic Policy Toward the Asian Health Initiative," the "Asian Grand Design for Regulatory Harmonization of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices" (decided by the Headquarters for Health and Medical Care Strategy Promotion on June 20, 2019) and the "Implementation Strategy for the Asian Grand Design for Regulatory Harmonization of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices" (decided by the Headquarters for Health and Medical Care Strategy Promotion on July 14, 2020) have been formulated.

established in 2016, This center has conducted capacity-building activities toward regulatory harmonization with regulatory authorities especially from Asian countries. Through bilateral meetings and symposiums with Asian countries under the government initiatives, Japan has gained trust in its pharmaceutical regulatory system. As a result, Japan has become as a reference country for the abridged regulatory pathways³ in various countries, including those in Asia.

For the promotion of clinical development system, since 2020, in order to facilitate Japan-led international joint clinical trials and accelerate the development and supply of drugs, the National Cancer Center (NCC) and the National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGM) have established a clinical research and clinical trials base/network (“ATLAS” for non-infectious diseases and “ARISE” for infectious diseases) through local education/training and improving facilities as the “Project for Establishment of Network of Clinical Research and Clinical Trials in Asia” of the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED).⁴ Through strengthening collaboration between the PMDA Asia Office and the NCC Asian Partnerships Office in Bangkok, Japan will establish a parallel and cyclical support system, the so-called drug and medical device development ecosystem, in order to improve the clinical development environment and to strengthen regulatory capacity, starting with Thailand.

Through these activities and monitoring regulatory and market trends in other countries, Japan aims to gradually expand the ecosystem to other Asian and Indo-Pacific countries.

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The PMDA will continue to contribute to the capacity building of regulatory authorities in Asian countries through the PMDA-ATC. Collaborating with the NCC and NCGM, the PMDA will provide support to regulatory authorities, primarily in Thailand, through the PMDA Asia Office established in Bangkok in order to strengthen regulatory capacity based on the needs of stakeholders in the country, including regulatory authorities, industry, and academia.

The NCC and NCGM will cooperate with the PMDA to support the rapid

³ A regulatory procedure wherein a market authorization decision for a drug is based on the approval granted by another regulatory authority.

⁴ The various projects listed as NCGM initiatives in the text will continue to be implemented in the JIHS after April 1, 2025.

commercialization of pharmaceuticals and other products by consulting, coordinating, and conducting international joint clinical trials and clinical research, initially focusing primarily on Thailand.

With future expansion of the ecosystem in mind, we will move forward with accepting the entire application dossier in English for the market approval of ethical drugs in Japan and, in parallel, conduct research on regulations, market needs, and other relevant factors in other Asian countries.

③ Timeline

The PMDA will promote research activities and coordination response to understand the needs of Asian countries through the PMDA Asia Office established in Bangkok in July 2024. The NCC will maintain the structure of two full-time Japanese staff in the Thai office of ATLAS. The NCGM will also expand the cooperative office at Siriraj Hospital in Thailand in 2024.

(4-2) Circular Elderly Health Strategy: Foreign Care Worker Policy and Support for International Expansion of Care Providers

① Purpose

Aging is a global challenge, and particularly for Asian countries that will face significant aging issues in the coming years, it is crucial to establish and strengthen sustainable health care systems for the elderly. Japan has been a pioneer in establishing a system for providing high-quality long-term care services under its long-term care insurance system and has created career paths for long-term care workers, including certified care workers. Under the current circumstances, a key issue is to secure a sufficient workforce to ensure that necessary long-term care services can be reliably provide in the future.

In order to strengthen cooperation with Asian countries and to address these challenges, Japan will take the opportunity of the ongoing discussions on the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on international standards for long-term care. Japan aims to share its extensive knowledge on high-quality long-term care services and human resource development by actively contributing to various international discussions in the field of elderly health care. By enhancing international credibility in the area of long-term care through these efforts, Japan will increase the number of foreign caregivers interested in learning about Japan's long-term care,

which, in turn, will help to secure domestic care service workers. Additionally, foreign caregivers who have learned about Japan's long-term care will introduce these practices in their home countries, thereby creating a virtuous cycle in the elderly health care. In this context, efforts to secure foreign caregivers will be strengthened from both quality and quantity perspectives, including strategic efforts to recruit the overseas foreign caregivers and support them for settling in Japan.

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Sharing of knowledge on long-term care services

Currently, the ISO is investigating the formulation of international standards for long-term care, and discussions are also taking place in Japan in private committees composed of academics, related organizations, and others. By actively contributing to these discussions and other international discussions in various frameworks in the field of health care for the elderly, our country aims to share knowledge on Japan's high-quality long-term care services and to contribute to international understanding of Japan's high-quality long-term care services, including dementia care.

In addition, given the recent downward trend in the rate of Certification of Needed Long-Term Care by age group in Japan amidst the aging population, our country will collect and organize further evidence on how this trend relates to Japan's health promotion and care prevention efforts through community support programs. We also examine the relationship between the extension of healthy life expectancy and the cost of long-term care and share the knowledge with other countries. This will contribute to the realization of vibrant, healthy societies with longevity in each country.

Through these efforts, we aim to increase Japan's international credibility in the field of long-term care, and to attract foreign long-term care workers interested in Japan's long-term care, as well as to encourage the international expansion of domestic long-term care providers.

Strengthening of outreach to overseas local communities

The direction of a comprehensive and strategic response to strengthen the ability to attract foreign caregivers will be discussed with the participation of government agencies, local governments, academics, care providers, and other experts. In this process, we will establish the sending-out routes to Japan according to the circumstances of each country. In particular, for countries like India, where

establishing such routes is particularly urgent, we will develop the recruitment approaches in accordance with their economic development, regions, target groups, and other factors, by addressing key issues and fostering networking among relevant stakeholders.

*For example, a creative approach is needed in Vietnam and the Philippines such as recruiting in rural areas, while recruitment in Myanmar is on the rise due to its Japan-friendly environment. Nepal and Sri Lanka are expected to have people who will be accepted as students aiming to become caregivers and as specified skilled workers, while more and more people from Indonesia and India are expected to be accepted due to the size of their populations.

In addition, with the needs of Asian countries in mind, we have been gradually expanding Tests related to specified skilled workers. We will continue to consider the accessibility of test sites and test venues and strengthen information dissemination by holding local information sessions to raise awareness of employment opportunities in the long-term care field in Japan and to enhance understanding of the Japan's approach to long-term care.

In order to secure foreign long-term care personnel in Japan, MHLW will support long-term care providers who are actively expanding overseas by building relationships and strengthening cooperation with overseas local educational institutions, and by conducting recruitment and publicity activities through local job fair. In addition, with regard to JICA's project to strengthen the long-term care human resources capacity in Indonesia, the MHLW will dispatch experts to support the development of educational programs and materials for long-term care workers at public training schools and the training of teachers in this field, with a view to also contributing to increasing the number of caregivers working in Japan.

We will promote networking among foreign long-term care workers who have worked in Japan and returned to their home countries, and visualize how their experience in Japan can benefit their careers in their home countries, such as working in the local long-term care industry, to demonstrate incentives to working in Japan. In addition, we will consider supporting efforts to standardize and disseminate Japanese long-term care techniques in Asian countries, and organize related issues, including mutual recognition of long-term care qualifications, so that there will be opportunities for returnees to work after their return and for Japanese employees to be dispatched to overseas long-term care facilities.

Promotion of support for settlement in Japan

To ensure that foreign caregivers can work comfortably in Japan, we will support host organizations in improving working and living conditions. We will enhance the attractiveness of long-term employment in Japan by enabling them to experience diverse tasks and advance their careers. For example, we will require host organizations to create career development plans for those engaged in home-visit services and improve access to initial training and practical training programs. By providing clear career pathways in the long-term care field and facilitating career advancement, we aim to make long-term employment in Japan more appealing. In addition, in order for foreign nationals who come to Japan under Technical Intern Training Program and other programs to be able to enjoy the benefits of the use of the government-issued ID card, “My Number Card,” as a health insurance card, such as better medical care, as soon as possible, the relevant organizations, including supervisory bodies, will provide thorough support for obtaining the My Number Card promptly after their arrival in Japan.

Moreover, we will provide learning support for the acquisition of the national qualification of care worker, such as holding test preparation courses throughout Japan. In addition, as part of efforts to create an environment conducive to taking the national examination, we will consider introducing a part-passing system for the national care worker examination so that everyone can balance work and study and aim for career advancement.

Furthermore, we will provide information to domestic long-term care providers on how they can actively expand internationally to acquire human resources and accept foreign long-term care workers from emerging countries.

③ Timeline

We have already participated as an observer in a domestic committee of experts on international standards for long-term care, and will continue to engage in discussions in cooperation with related organizations.

Regarding the outcomes of the Preventive Service to Long-Term Care efforts, we will continue our research in FY2024.

Regarding the enhancement of the ability to attract foreign caregivers, the direction of action will be discussed by experts in FY2024.

The committee of experts is currently working on the introduction of a partial pass

for the national examination for caregivers. A summary of the results is expected to be completed by the summer of 2024.

(4-3) International development of medical care including training of foreign medical personnel and medical inbound

① Purpose

Through strategic efforts in developing foreign healthcare professionals and international expansion of medical care, including medical inbound, we aim to enhance healthcare standards and address health disparities in the Indo-Pacific region, including Asian countries. This will contribute to the international community and support the growth and further innovation of Japan's healthcare industry.

② Contents

We will promote the development of foreign healthcare professionals to contribute to improving healthcare standards and addressing the health disparities in the Indo-Pacific region, including Asian countries. Specifically, we will engage in a demonstration project involving the establishment of a model⁵ for accepting foreign students into Japanese medical schools, utilizing scholarships funded by contributions to the ERIA. This project will involve approximately 20 participants.

In addition, we will promote the acceptance of foreign patients visiting Japan (inbound) and the international expansion of pharmaceuticals and medical devices (outbound). While carefully considering our regional healthcare based on our national universal health insurance system, we will collaborate with relevant government ministries and agencies to establish a system for accepting foreign patients based on private medical care. Specifically, we will undertake projects to enhance the acceptance system for foreign patients at medical institutions, such as providing medical interpreters and coordinators for foreign patients. We will also promote the international expansion of healthcare technologies through dispatching healthcare professionals and accepting trainees, led by the JIHS, and conducting research projects aimed at the practical application of medical technologies considering the needs of developing and emerging countries. Moreover, we will support Japanese companies in acquiring WHO Prequalification (PQ) and promote the international

⁵ Also consider the specific details of the scheme, such as the university's medical school capacity and the system for accepting international students.

expansion of pharmaceuticals and medical devices by utilizing procurement frameworks of international organizations. Furthermore, the objective of providing advanced medical care to foreign visitors to Japan (medical inbound) is to address health disparities in Asia and other regions, ensure that the benefits of innovation are widely distributed among the public, and extend Japan's healthcare model across Asia. This will lay the groundwork for improving and disseminating the quality of medical devices, pharmaceuticals, and other products. In collaboration with the relevant ministries and organizations related to medical inbound⁶, we will promote efforts towards achieving these goals by conducting assessments and analyses of the current situation and challenges, and set strategic goals to maintain and advance cutting-edge medical technologies while organizing and promoting the acceptance of foreign patients.

③ Timeline

We will begin examining a demonstration project for establishing a model for accepting foreign students into Japanese medical schools, utilizing scholarships funded by contributions to ERIA from the fiscal year 2024.

Regarding the promotion of the foreign patients acceptance system at medical institutions, we will continue implementing the project through private companies and relevant agencies in the fiscal year 2024, with the aim of expanding it in subsequent years.

For the international expansion of medical technologies, the project will continue in the fiscal year 2024 through NCGM⁷ and private companies, with a view to expanding to the Asian region and beyond in the following years.

The research projects on the practical application of medical technologies in developing and emerging countries through private companies and relevant agencies will continue to be implemented in the fiscal year 2024, with plans for expansion in subsequent years.

The promotion of international expansion of pharmaceutical and medical device

⁶ The Japan Medical Education Foundation (JMIP) certifies medical institutions that provide foreigners with safe and secure medical services in Japan, such as multilingual medical information and cross-cultural/religious support, and recommends hospitals that are willing and able to receive travelers as Japan International Hospitals (JIH). Medical Excellence Japan (MEJ), which recommends hospitals that are willing and able to receive travelers as Japan International Hospitals (JIH).

⁷ JIHS will be established in April 2025 through the merger of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases and NCGM.

industries utilizing procurement frameworks of international organizations will continue in the fiscal year 2024 through private enterprises.

(5) Strategies to ensure a stable supply of pharmaceuticals as economic security

① Purpose

In March 2019, a serious issue occurred due to prolonged supply disruption of cephazolin, an antimicrobial drug with a high dependence on active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from China. The supply issues, stemming from manufacturing troubles in China, had a significant impact on the smooth provision of medical care in Japan.

In light of this background, the “Act on the Promotion of Ensuring National Security through Integrated Implementation of Economic Measures” enacted in May 2022 designates antimicrobial drugs among the⁸ Stably Secured Pharmaceuticals as specified critical products under the Act, along with efforts to promote diversification of supply sources of APIs for other pharmaceutical products, In addition to efforts to promote diversification of supply sources of APIs for other drugs, a system to supply products to medical facilities without interruption even when supply of APIs from overseas is disrupted should be established.

② Contents

Regarding antimicrobial drugs, which are specified critical products, domestically produced APIs are expected to be more expensive than those produced overseas. The increased cost is anticipated to reduce the profitability for manufactures. For this reason, in the second supplementary budget for FY2022, ¥55.3 billion has been allocated for domestication of antimicrobial APIs, covering part of the costs associated with constructing manufacturing facilities and other related expenses.

In addition, it is necessary to create an environment in which domestically manufactured APIs can be used continuously in the production of antimicrobial drugs during normal times. We will comprehensively consider various issues, including trends in the price differences between domestic and foreign APIs, the structure of support measures including its operation cost, and the feasibility of support measures.

For pharmaceuticals other than specified critical products, we have been

⁸ The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) has selected these drugs as those that are necessary for the seamless provision of medical care to protect the lives of the people in terms of Japan's security, and for which special consideration is required to ensure stability.

promoting stockpiling through the “Support Project for Stable Supply of Pharmaceuticals,” which includes diversifying supply sources of APIs and securing internal and distribution stocks. We will continue to advance these initiatives moving forward.

③ Timeline

Regarding antimicrobial drugs, which are specified critical products, we will consider a framework for ensuring the continuous use of domestically manufactured APIs and strategies to secure a certain level of domestic distribution. We aim to reach a conclusion on these matters by the end of FY2024.

(6) Appropriate contributions to international organizations and Global Health Initiatives (GHIs)

Tuberculosis (TB), malaria, Ebola, and HIV/AIDS have a major impact on society and the economy worldwide, transcending national borders. In recent years, COVID-19, AMR, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), and other issues have significantly increased the need for the international community to cooperate and collaborate to address these challenges.

Currently, the MHLW contributes to international organizations such as WHO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), as well as to GHIs, including the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT Fund), Coalition for Innovation in Fighting Infectious Disease Epidemics (CEPI), Global Drug Facility (GDF), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, Global Antimicrobial Research and Development Partnership (GARDP), Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund), and CARB-X (the Biopharmaceutical Accelerator against Drug Resistance). The MHLW will promote the strengthening of these partnerships while ensuring that each organization make the most of the contributions to deliver their performance in effective and efficient manner, performance in alignment with the MHLW’s contribution objectives.

(7) Promotion of international policy dialogue

To date, Japan has been actively engaged in the G7 Health Ministers’ Meeting and the G20 Health Ministers’ Meeting to address various global health challenges. Recently, we have discussed building and strengthening the GHAs to respond to

health emergencies, contributing to the achievement of more resilient, equitable, and sustainable UHC through strengthening health systems, and promoting health innovation to address various health challenges.

Since 2003, Japan has hosted the ASEAN-Japan High-Level Meeting on Caring Societies with the aim of strengthening cooperative relations and human resource development in the field of social security with ASEAN countries. Additionally, “Trilateral Health Ministers’ Meeting among Japan, People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Korea has been held annually since 2007. Furthermore, the ASEAN+3 (China, Republic of Korea, and Japan) Health Ministers’ Meeting has been held biennially since 2004.

There is also a need to strategically increase opportunities for bilateral policy dialogue, where such dialogues can be more effective, particularly in areas like drug discovery-related collaboration.

(8) Strengthening the governance of the Ministry’s international department and the international health human resource strategy

In order for the MHLW to work strategically on global health, governance needs to be strengthened with regard to the international department within the Ministry. Specific measures to strengthen the organization are as follows.

- The Office of Global Health Coordination, headed by the Vice-Minister for Medical Affairs, will be established to coordinate the Ministry’s global health initiatives, particularly in priority areas. This office will operate through the line of the Vice-Minister for Medical Affairs, Senior Assistant Minister, and Deputy Assistant Minister.
- The International Affairs Division of the Minister’s Secretariat will serve as the secretariat and act as a cross-sectoral coordinating body for international projects within the Ministry. It will work in cooperation with the International Labour Division. In addition, deputy assistant minister-level positions in the relevant bureaus will be concurrently assigned to the International Affairs Division to ensure that they can promote measures in alignment with the International Affairs Division staff.

Moreover, in order for the Government of Japan to demonstrate its initiatives in collaboration with international organizations, we will provide support to increase the number of Japanese staff working in these organizations and ensure that their abilities

are fully utilized. To ensure that necessary personnel are placed in the appropriate positions, the MHLW will strategically develop, utilize, and support these human resources. The International Affairs Division and the Human Resource Strategy Center for Global Health of NCGM will collaboratively form the “Global Health Human Resource Pool” and implement the following measures.

① Development of human resources for global health

The MHLW will cultivate and train human resources to be effective at the forefront by actively appointing outstanding individuals to positions in international organizations. In collaboration with the Human Resource Strategy Center for Global Health of NCGM, the MHLW will research and develop strategies for personnel development methods, including those in the private sector.

② Utilization of international health human resources

The MHLW will compile a list of potential personnel from within and outside the Ministry, including those who have lived or studied abroad, and will support them to be appointed to the position in the international organization.

③ Support for Japanese staff

Form communities with Japanese staff belonging to each international organization, hold exchanges or meetings at least once a year at the International Affairs Division, and provide necessary support to the extent possible.

Furthermore, in advancing the initiatives across various field, the MHLW will also focus on setting the international standard that help to address global health challenges we are facing. We will work on developing personnel capable of leading international standardization and will collaborate with the private sector and other organizations to promote integrated efforts in international collaboration and qualification.