

Chair's Statement of the 11th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting

(3 August 2018)

1. The 11th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in the Republic of Singapore, on 3 August 2018, back to back with the 51st ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Taro Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and participated by H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana, Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia, H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, H.E. Mr. Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Review of the New Tokyo Strategy 2015

2. As 2018 is the last year of the "New Tokyo Strategy 2015" (hereinafter referred to as the "Strategy") and the "Mekong-Japan Action Plan for Realization of the New Tokyo Strategy 2015" (hereinafter referred to as the "Action Plan"), the Ministers reviewed the current status of the Strategy and Action Plan. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the progress made in various projects of the Action Plan and appreciated their contributions to the development and prosperity in the region. They also reaffirmed the importance to promote international standards of "quality infrastructure" development such as openness, transparency, economic viability, social and environmental considerations, financial soundness of recipient countries under the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" and the "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure."

3. The Ministers appreciated the review of the Japan-Mekong Connectivity Initiative based on the quantitative analysis on the major infrastructure projects in both hard and soft aspects as well as on the human resource development programs. They noted with satisfaction that the review reflects a much more connected region including through the development of major infrastructures on the East-West Economic Corridor and the Southern Economic Corridor. In order to realize the possible achievements set out in the review, the Ministers acknowledged the need to continue steady implementation of ongoing projects under the Japan-Mekong Connectivity Initiative.

4. The Ministers concurred that the Mekong countries have made significant efforts to realize sustainable development, but there still remains more to be done. The Ministers of the Mekong countries highly valued the projects, especially in the areas of disaster risk reduction and climate change. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the holding of the Fifth Green Mekong Forum, co-hosted by Japan and Thailand on 12 February 2018, where inter-sectored participants joined the discussion and exchanged their knowledge and views. The Ministers also welcome the continued commitment and readiness of Japan and Thailand to co-host the Green Mekong Forum in the future.

5. The Ministers expressed their appreciation for close collaboration between Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) and between JICA and Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) under respective Partnership Arrangements for further development of Mekong countries. The Ministers also highly valued the coordination with stakeholders such as Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN (ERIA) and East Asia and the ASEAN Promotion Centre on Trade, Investment and Tourism (ASEAN-Japan Centre) as well as regional cooperation frameworks and programs including Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program (GMS), the Ayeyawady – Chao Phraya – Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) and the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI).

Broad Orientation of the Future Mekong-Japan Cooperation

6. Based on the review of the Strategy and Action Plan, the Ministers identified priority areas of the Mekong-Japan cooperation, in particular, to narrow the development gap, strengthen the regional integration and participate in the global value chain: 1) vibrant and effective connectivity; 2) people-to-people connectivity; and 3) sustainable development. They underlined the importance of synergy between the promotion of investment and the enhancement of quality infrastructure development, which enable the industrial linkages in the regional and global value chain. They also highlighted the necessity of taking into account the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the adoption of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025) and the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023) which was adopted at the 8th ACMECS Summit on 16 June 2018 in Bangkok. The Ministers underscored the importance of maintaining and reinforcing a free and open order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific in order to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region. In this regard, the Ministers of the Mekong countries welcomed Japan's active and constructive contribution to cooperation and development in the region and the world

through initiatives such as “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy,” which also contributes to advancing connectivity in the Mekong region and beyond.

7. The Ministers reaffirmed that they will make more efforts in further enhancing connectivity through the development of “quality infrastructure” in both hard and soft aspects which is key to realizing a sustainable, inclusive and prosperous Mekong sub region as well as a free and open Indo-Pacific. They also acknowledged the need to ensure that projects to be undertaken reflect the real needs and priorities of the Mekong countries. The Ministers shared the view that “vibrant and effective” should continue to be the key concept of the connectivity in the Mekong-Japan cooperation. The Ministers also affirmed the necessity to seek synergies between MPAC 2025 and the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023) and the Mekong-Japan cooperation.

8. The Ministers renewed their commitment to strengthening people-to-people connectivity including human resource development with a view to realizing a people-centered community. The Ministers emphasized the importance of industrial human resource development, universal health coverage, primary and higher education and women’s empowerment. The Ministers welcomed the efforts through Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN) for human resource development in healthcare related industries.

9. The Ministers shared the view that sustainable development including green growth remains important policy goals in the Mekong region. In this regard, the Ministers highly appreciated the Action Plan for “A Decade toward the Green Mekong” Initiative, which was announced in 2010. They noted that the Action Plan for “A Decade toward the Green Mekong” should be updated, taking into account the challenges that Mekong countries are facing. The Ministers stressed their commitment to further collaboration between Mekong-Japan cooperation and the Mekong River Commission to deal with the water related technical issues in the Mekong River Basin, especially on the sustainable management of water resources, including trans-boundary water resources management. The Ministers shared the view that Japan and the Mekong countries will continue to co-implement the initiative on Data Collection Survey on the Basin Management and Environmental Conservation in the Mekong River Basin. The Ministers reaffirmed that future cooperation should further contribute to the international commitments made by each country in the region under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

10. The Ministers instructed their SOMs to consider future Mekong-Japan cooperation in line with the above-mentioned orientation so that the leaders can adopt a new strategy on the cooperation at the Mekong-Japan summit in Tokyo this year.

11. The Ministers decided to celebrate the year 2019, which marks the 10th anniversary of Japan-Mekong cooperation, as “Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2019,” to promote mutual understandings and exchanges between peoples of Mekong countries and Japan.

12. The Ministers confirmed the convening of the 10th Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting in Japan in principle on 8-9 October 2018, and the 12th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Thailand in 2019.

Regional and Global Issues

13. The Ministers also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern, including the situation in the Korean Peninsula, recent developments in the South China Sea (SCS), trade, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and transboundary challenges such as terrorism and cyber threats. The Ministers reaffirmed the positive advances brought about in the inter-Korean Summits and the US-DPRK Summit. They agreed on the importance of international efforts to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, the fulfilment of relevant UN obligations, and the establishment of lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The Ministers further agreed to continue cooperation on counter-terrorism, including the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2396; and on cybersecurity. The Ministers discussed the importance of promoting a rules-based order in the region, including through upholding international law such as the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the SCS. They reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation, and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. They also emphasised the importance of non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states.

14. In the context of discussions on the situation in the Korean Peninsula, some Ministers emphasised the importance of addressing humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the resolution of the abductions issue.