

CHAIR'S STATEMENT MEKONG-JAPAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

TOKYO, 16 JANUARY 2008

1. The Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, an initiative of [the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program \[PDF\]](#)  announced in January 2007, was convened in Tokyo on January 16, 2008. Foreign Minister of Japan H.E. Mr. Masahiko Koumura chaired the meeting, in which Foreign Ministers of the Mekong Region countries, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia H.E. Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic H.E. Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Foreign Minister of the Union of Myanmar H.E. Mr. Nyan Win, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand H.E. Mr. Nitya Pibulsonggram, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam H.E. Dr. Pham Gia Khiem participated. The meeting discussed wide-ranging issues under the themes of trust, development and stability, as well as regional and global issues.
2. We, Foreign Ministers of Japan and the Mekong Region countries, recognized that the Mekong Region has become more interdependent and risen as an emerging market with self-reliance efforts by respective countries and the development of major infrastructure such as the East-West Economic Corridor, and that Japan has been a long-standing and indispensable partner for the region. We shared the view that enduring stability and growing prosperity of the region is important to a resilient ASEAN Community and a dynamic East Asia. We recognized the significant role of Japan in the regional development, as well as the role of countries in the Mekong region, including Thailand as a development partner. We shared the vision of a "Region of Hope and Development," and stressed the importance of inter- and intra-regional cooperation in seizing common opportunities and in addressing common challenges.

Trust

3. We noted with satisfaction the long-standing friendship and cooperation in all relevant areas between Japan and the Mekong Region countries, and reaffirmed the importance of dialogue in further enhancing mutual trust. In 2007, Prime Minister of Thailand H.E. General Surayud Chulanont (Ret.), Prime Minister of Lao PDR H.E. Mr. Bouasone Bouphavanh, Prime Minister of Cambodia Samdech Hun Sen, President of Vietnam H.E. Mr. Nguyen Minh Triet, and many high-ranking officials of the Mekong Region countries successfully visited Japan. We welcomed the Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and decided to promote dialogue between Japan and the Mekong Region countries through various fora, including Japan-ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), ASEAN+3, EAS (East Asia Summit), and ACMECS (the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy), and CLV+J (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Japan) Cooperation. Some Mekong Region countries proposed the Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting be held on a regular basis, and we would further discuss the proposal.
4. We decided to celebrate the year 2009 as "Mekong-Japan Exchange Year," and promote various exchanges, such as political dialogue, economic, cultural and youth exchanges, and tourism. In this connection, we supported Vietnam's intention to host a Mekong-Japan Tourism and Cultural Festival in Vietnam in 2009, and decided to cooperate towards a Mekong Festival to be held in Japan in 2009.

5. The Japanese side announced its intention to receive more than 10,000 youths of the Mekong Region countries in five years under various programs including the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme. In this connection, the Japanese side stated that it plans to organize joint Japan-Mekong youth exchange events in 2008 and 2009.
6. We hoped that the operations of direct charter flights between Japan and Cambodia, and the recent arrangements for liberalized air services between Japan and Thailand would expand tourism exchanges between Japan and the Mekong Region countries. In this connection, we welcomed the ASEAN-Japan Centre's intention to commence a survey for eco-cultural tourism promotion in the CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam) countries in the near future, and the Thai side expressed its intention to contribute to this effort with its expertise. We welcomed the signing by Cambodia and Thailand of the Agreement to implement the ACMECS Single Visa that will help facilitate travel and promote tourism of nationals of third countries in the region. The Japanese side welcomed the visa exemption for Japanese tourists by some Mekong Region countries as well as the announcement made by Lao PDR on the short-term visa exemption for Japanese business people.
7. We welcomed the establishment of the Japan-Mekong Parliamentary Friendship League in Japan, and expressed our high hope for its contribution to strengthening relations between Japan and the Mekong Region countries.

Development

8. The Japanese side explained that in accordance with [the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program \[PDF\]](#) , Japan has been making steadfast efforts to expand its official development assistance (ODA) for three years from this fiscal year, which includes assistance to infrastructure development, human resources development, environmental protection and poverty reduction. The Thai side shared with the Meeting the information of its infrastructure and human development cooperation with the Mekong Region countries, under the Greater Mekong Subregion Cooperation (GMS) and ACMECS development cooperation framework. The Mekong Region countries highly appreciated Japan's and Thailand's continued support for the social and economic development of the region, and welcomed Japan as a development partner to regional cooperation frameworks, such as ACMECS, GMS and CLV+J, and reiterated their invitation for Japan to work in close partnership with them in these frameworks.
9. We highly appreciated the progress of regional projects such as the "Development Triangle," the "East West Economic Corridor" and the "2nd East West Economic Corridor." Japan and relevant countries decided on a list of candidate projects for the "Development Triangle" that utilizes approximately 20 million USD of the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). We announced our intention to develop cooperative projects to improve efficiency of logistics and distribution of the "East West Economic Corridor" and the "2nd East West Economic Corridor" and realize the recommendations of the actual run test along the "East West Economic Corridor" by utilizing approximately 20 million USD of the JAIF. In this connection, we decided to hold a senior officials' meeting within the framework of Mekong-Japan cooperation this year to coordinate these projects. Recognizing the importance of partnership with private sectors, we encouraged private sectors to support infrastructure and human development projects and programs and promote the utilization of existing logistics infrastructure for the expansion of trade, investment, tourism as well as economic and social development. The Vietnamese side expressed its intention to establish a sub-regional logistic training center in Vietnam for strengthening logistic capacity building in the Mekong Region countries.
10. We welcomed the conclusion of the negotiation of the ASEAN-JAPAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement, the entry into force of the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA), the signing of the Agreement between Japan and Cambodia for the

Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment, and the signing of the Agreement between Japan and Lao PDR for the Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment. The Japanese side and the Vietnamese side expressed their determination to further advance the negotiation to conclude a mutually beneficial and high-level bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement at the earliest possible date. The Japanese side also welcomed the signing of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint, and other economic agreements that will help realize the ASEAN Economic Community and contribute to closing development gaps in the region.

11. We welcomed recent progress in cooperation on improving the investment environment, such as commencing "The Japan-Vietnam Joint Initiative to Improve Business Environment with a view to strengthening Vietnam's Competitiveness" Phase III, and public-private joint dialogues on investment in Lao PDR and Myanmar in cooperation with the Japanese business community in Thailand. We expected that cooperation between Japan and the Mekong Region countries such as Thailand and Vietnam on investment would provide greater economies of scale and benefit the region through Japanese business activities involving in other countries in the region. We also welcomed the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) and the Export ? Import Bank (EXIM Bank) and the Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) of Thailand to promote partnership on the development of the GMS. We appreciated the ASEAN-Japan Centre's continued effort to attract Japan's investment in the region, including the seminar on the occasion of the Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting.
12. We shared the intention to promote capacity-building projects for Mekong Region countries. In this context, the Mekong Region countries appreciated Japan's regional training and technical assistance projects in various fields such as customs, finance, phytosanitary, agricultural production, transport, logistics, water supply systems, and labor as well as Thailand's development and technical cooperation projects in areas such as sustainable agriculture, human resources development and alternative development including through the Mekong Institute in Khon Kean Province of Thailand. The Japanese side expressed its intention to assist the establishment of IT Engineers Examination and to implement demonstration projects to introduce IT systems of Japan to the region.
13. The Mekong Region countries highly appreciated that many projects in each Mekong Region country and regional projects are carried out by Japan Trust Funds established in the Asian Development Bank (ADB). We confirmed the importance of the coordination with the ADB for the development of the Mekong Region.
14. We stressed the importance of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin, and welcomed the recent progress in cooperation, such as the successful first international conference at ministerial level in Hanoi in April 2007. The Mekong Region countries appreciated Japan's financial and technical assistance to the MRC.

Stability

15. We expressed our determination to strengthen cooperation in addressing threat of infectious diseases, inter alia avian and pandemic influenza. We also expressed our satisfaction to Japan's regional cooperation in the social sector improvement, including medical care and welfare. The Mekong Region countries appreciated Japan's support for more than 200,000 additional courses of anti-viral medicine to the national stockpile of the Mekong Region countries by utilizing the JAIF. We decided to improve the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology of Vietnam as a regional center of excellence in infectious diseases in the future. The Thai side informed the Meeting of ongoing work in this area including Thailand's initiatives on the establishment of a seed fund of 2.5 million USD to address the challenge of avian influenza in the ACMECS region.

16. We noted with satisfaction Japan's regional cooperation and initiatives on human security to address transnational issues in the region, such as terrorism, environmental protection, natural disaster mitigation, drugs, health issues including HIV/AIDS, and human trafficking, and initiatives of Thailand as a member of the Human Security Network (HSN) to advance the priorities of developing countries on human security issues in the region. Japan expressed its support for further regional cooperation in these areas.
17. We shared the view that the rule of law and transparency of administrative procedures are important for social and economic development. In this connection, the Mekong Region countries appreciated Japan's support for legal enhancement of the CLV countries as well as capacity-building of the Mekong Region countries in the legal fields. The Japanese side expressed its intention to consider projects to share Japan's experience in relation to the democratic system and media by utilizing the JAIF. The Japanese side expressed its high hope for expedited and fair Khmer Rouge trials. Cambodia welcomed Japan's intention to send an electoral monitoring group for the general election in Cambodia this year.
18. On the situation in Myanmar, we emphasized the urgent need for genuine dialogue including all parties concerned towards national reconciliation. In this regard, we reaffirmed our full cooperation with the UN, in particular with Secretary-General's Special Advisor Dr. Ibrahim Gambari, and encouraged Myanmar to continue to work closely with the UN.

Regional and Global Issues

19. We exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern. We shared the view on the importance of resolving outstanding issues concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), including denuclearization, for maintaining peace and stability in North East Asia and the Asia Pacific. It is the strong intent of the Government of Japan to normalize relations with the DPRK through the comprehensive resolution of all the outstanding issues. The Mekong Region countries support all efforts to this end. We called for the full implementation of the denuclearization measures agreed in the "Second Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement" and for concrete and effective steps to be taken towards the full implementation of the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005. We stressed the need for the DPRK to address the humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the abduction issue.
20. We shared the view on the importance of early realization of the United Nations reform as reflected in the World Summit Outcome Document and in subsequent relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, especially the Security Council reform through expanding both its permanent and non-permanent membership. The Japanese side appreciated countries in the Mekong region for their continuous support for Japan to become a permanent member of the Security Council.
21. We expressed our support for all efforts, collective and individual, that will help developing countries achieve their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this connection, we welcomed Japan's efforts to achieving internationally set development assistance targets and Thailand's efforts to pursue MDG Plus and its contributions to promoting development cooperation in the South-South framework under Goal 8 of the MDGs.
22. We reaffirmed our determination to address climate change and other environmental issues. The Mekong Region countries expressed their support for Japan's initiatives in global environmental protection, and appreciated Japan's proposal "Cool Earth 50," including the long-term global target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by half from the current level by 2050. We reaffirmed to continue cooperation to promote the use of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). We expressed our determination to actively take part in the process under the "Bali Action Plan" aiming to establish an effective framework beyond 2012 in which all major emitting countries participate. We reaffirmed the importance of setting goals and formulating action plans to improve energy

efficiency by 2009 under the Cebu Declaration on East Asian Energy Security and the Singapore Declaration on Climate Change, Energy and Environment. We affirmed the importance of promoting co-benefits approach, which address domestic environmental pollution and climate change simultaneously. We appreciated regional cooperation in the field of environment, such as water, acid rain, environmentally sustainable transport, wetland conservation, energy efficiency, and clean energy. We confirmed our intention to promote concrete cooperation through various fora, including the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue on Environmental Cooperation. In this connection, the Japanese side expressed its intent to expand its 3R (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) planning assistance in Vietnam to neighboring countries with the cooperation of the ADB and United Nations Center for Regional Development.