

## **Iraqi Investment Seminar in Tokyo**

### **Message from H.E. Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone, Minister for Foreign Affairs**

I would like to welcome the Iraqi delegation which has come all the way from the Republic of Iraq to promote Japanese investment in Iraq.

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Iraq. This significant year will be engraved in our history as an important year for the building and expanding the bilateral economic relations between the two countries.

In January this year, H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, former Prime Minister of Japan, visited Iraq as the special envoy of Prime Minister Taro Aso. During the visit, the Declaration on Establishing a Comprehensive Partnership between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Iraq was signed, which advocates long-term friendly relations between the two countries. In March, top executives from twelve Japanese companies and government officials paid a courtesy call on H.E. Mr. Nouri al-Maliki, Prime Minister of Iraq, and other officials of the Government of Iraq, and exchanged opinions to strengthen economic relations between the two countries.

In addition, this year, members of the Embassy of Japan in Iraq, along with a certain number of Japanese companies, visited the city of Basra, in the southern part of Iraq, in order to see sites of ODA Loan projects. I heard that they were impressed to see that, despite repeated wars and economic sanctions, power plants and other such facilities that Japanese companies had built during the 1970s and 1980s were still being maintained and operated by Iraqi technicians. "We have waited for Japan for thirty years," they said, and their voice was carried by the media widely.

It is still necessary to be cautious of the security situation in Iraq. However, since the summer of 2007, there has been a steady trend of improvement, and I also hear that lives of Iraqi citizens have become more vibrant. Japan has proactively implemented reconstruction assistance in such forms as the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces and ODA Loans equivalent to 5 billion US dollars. I am pleased that stability is now being

gradually restored in Iraq. Japan will continue to assist in the reconstruction of the country through the steady implementation of ODA Loans, technical cooperation, and the strengthening of economic and business relations. I have also reiterated this point to H.E. Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, Minister of Foreign Affairs, during his visit to Japan last month.

I expect that Iraq is entering the stage of full reconstruction and development. I'd like to conclude my remarks by hoping that the Seminar provides a valuable opportunity for the participants in considering investment in Iraq.

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