

Statement by State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,

H.E.Mr. Kentaro SONOURA,

22nd Ordinary Meeting of the ACS Ministerial Council,

Havana, 10 March 2017

His Excellency Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parilla,

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba,

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of ACS,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to be here today, representing my Government and to have an opportunity to address at this Council.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Cuba, chair country of this meeting, for its hospitality.

Traditionally, Japan maintains excellent relationships with Latin American and Caribbean countries.

In this context, Prime Minister Abe visited Caribbean countries last three consecutive years, thus has enhanced dialogue with leaders of your countries, in advancing Japan's diplomacy taking a panoramic view of the globe.

We are determined to further strengthen the ties with countries of this region, a geopolitically important point, connecting the North and the South American continents, embraced by both the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans.

Japan wishes to support further development of this region in a way that suits its needs. Japan hopes to further enhance cooperation with the ACS member states.

They are increasing presence at international arena including the UN. We would like to work with you to universalize fundamental values that Japan and the ACS member states share.

It was precisely in such a context that, last September, Prime Minister Abe decided Japan to be an observer of the ACS and expressed the will. Today, following that decision, I attend this important Ministerial meeting here in Cuba. And I am delighted that we have added a new page in our history with your decision to accept our participation as an observer in this forum. As State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, I would like to lead our joint efforts to enhance the relationships between Japan and the ACS member states, together with Ministers and all representatives attending the meeting today.

Taking this occasion where Ministers and representatives of the ACS member states are present, once again, I would like to introduce the three guiding principles for “Japan’s cooperation for Latin America and the

Caribbean”, namely “Progress together”, “Lead together” and “Inspire together” that our Government is currently engaged.

“Progress together” is a call to further deepen our economic relations. The Government of Japan, in a unified manner together with the private sector, has been working on enhancing economic relations with many countries.

In this regard, I co-chaired the Second Japan-Cuba Joint Public-Private Committee Meeting last November in Tokyo, together with Minister Malmierca of Cuba. Last February, the Japan-Cuba Joint Public-Private Committee Meeting on Infrastructure was held here in Havana. As energy resources and infrastructures in Caribbean countries are great interest of Japanese private sector, I believe that there exist a lot of

possibilities of making even stronger economic ties with other ACS member states through such public-private partnership.

“Lead together” is our aspiration to enhance relationships with Latin American and Caribbean countries to work together on global issues in the international arena in order to achieve a better world. From this perspective, at the fifth Japan-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting held last September, we confirmed the importance of maintaining and enhancing cooperation between Japan and CARICOM countries for the realization of the UN Security Council reform. Japan would like to continue to enhance collaboration with the ACS member states in addressing global issues, such as disarmament and non-proliferation, climate change, among others.

“Inspire together” aims to pursue expanding exchange at

various levels, including high-level visits and invitation programmes.

Through the “Juntos!! Japan-Latin America and the Caribbean Exchange Program”, which we launched in 2015, fifty-four young leaders of this region visited Japan. Exchanges of youth, responsible for our future, are the groundwork for developing sustainable friendship and fostering trust, and they will forge our future. We will continue attaching great importance to such exchanges. Japan is ready to advance the three “together” with the ACS member states as our important partners.

I believe that Japan’s observer membership will become crucial milestone of the relationship between Japan and the ACS.

Japan and the ACS member states are important partners tied with common values and share missions at

international arena.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my resolution to work very hard with all of you to achieve closer ties between our two sides to progress together, lead together and inspire together.

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