

Joint Press Statement on Japan-Lao PDR Summit Meeting

1. At the official invitation of H.E. Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic visited Japan from March 14 to March 18, 2012. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Tokyo on March 16, 2012.
2. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda expressed sincere appreciation for the strong support and solidarity demonstrated by the Government and the people of Lao PDR in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The two sides recognized that such expression of tremendous goodwill and warm sentiments are testimony to the close friendship fostered over the years between the Government and the people of Japan and Lao PDR. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong expressed his heartfelt gratitude for Japan's prompt assistance at the time of the floods in Lao PDR.
3. The two sides reiterated the fact that the strong relationship and mutual trust between Japan and Lao PDR fostered throughout the course of more than five decades of diplomatic relations and cooperation are common and irreplaceable assets for the two countries. The two sides expressed their continuing commitment to further promote cooperation under the Comprehensive Partnership toward Enduring Friendship and Regional Prosperity.

Exchanges between the Two Countries

4. Recognizing that mutual understanding is a basis for a close relationship between the two countries, the two sides confirmed their willingness to have more frequent high-level visits and to strengthen policy dialogue at senior official levels.
5. The two sides also stressed the importance of people to people exchanges, including youth exchanges, and Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda announced his intention to invite Lao youths to Japan in the coming years under various programs including the Youth-Exchange Project with Asia-Oceania and North America (Kizuna (bond) Project), a new youth exchange project aimed at enhancing global understanding of Japan's recovery efforts following the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for

Students and Youths (JENESYS) Program. The two sides expressed their hope that Lao students who have studied in Japan or learned Japanese would help in promoting cooperation in their respective fields between Lao PDR and Japan.

6. The two sides shared the view that an increase in tourists from Japan to Lao PDR would contribute to enhancing mutual understanding as well as to the development of Lao PDR. In this context, the two sides highly regarded that the inauguration of direct charter flight between Lao PDR and Japan on a temporary basis in April would promote tourism between the two countries. The two sides expressed their intention to promote cooperation in the area of cultural heritage protection as well as dispatch of specialists in tourism promotion. The two sides discussed promoting of cultural exchanges towards the year 2015 which marks the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Lao PDR and Japan.

Cooperation for Strengthening the Bilateral Relationship

7. The two sides shared the view that both Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the trade and investment by the Japanese private sector are important for the sustainable economic growth of Lao PDR.
8. In terms of ODA, recognizing the increasing demand for development in Lao PDR, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda expressed Japan's decision to provide ODA loan to Lao PDR. In this context, the two sides welcomed the signing of Exchange of Notes on the Southern Region Power System Development Project and reaffirmed that the project contributes to economic growth and enhancement of social welfare by strengthening the national power grid in Lao PDR. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda stated Japan's intention to provide ODA loan in order to effectively support the development of Lao PDR. To this, Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong highly praised Japan's decision to provide ODA loan to Lao PDR and reiterated his determination to effectively utilize this loan for the development of Lao PDR and to further advance economic reforms for the economic prosperity of Lao PDR, emphasizing the importance of its ownership.
9. The two sides acknowledged that Lao PDR needs to improve basic socio-economic infrastructure, and to enhance its efforts in poverty reduction and capacity building. Japan emphasized its intention to assist Lao PDR in areas such as infrastructure development, agriculture, education and health.

10. In addition to ODA loan mentioned above, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda expressed Japan's intention to provide non-project grant aid for the purpose of contributing to the restoration and disaster prevention efforts by the Government of Lao PDR for the areas and people affected by the Flood Disaster in 2011. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong highly appreciated these decisions by Japan and stated that, by utilizing the equipment provided through this Japanese grant aid, the government and people of Lao PDR would alleviate their poverty situation.
11. The two sides shared the view that a more integrated regional economy would contribute to the sustainable development of Lao PDR. In this connection, Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong highly valued Japan's support for the Mekong Region development under the Japan-Mekong cooperation, including assistance for the East-West Economic Corridor.
12. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong also stated the Lao Government's commitment to most effectively use the infrastructure built under Japan's aid by promoting such reforms as the harmonization of customs procedures and the mutual recognition of vehicles for cross-border transportation, mindful of Vientiane City Development Master Plan approved by Lao PDR.
13. In terms of investment by the private sector, Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong, recognizing the key role investment plays in promoting development, expressed his strong commitment to achieving a favorable investment environment in Lao PDR, including a fair application of regulations as well as providing information to potential investors. The two sides welcomed investment by Japanese companies in Lao PDR, including small and medium enterprises, in sectors with high potential of growth in Lao PDR, such as electricity, agriculture and mining. In this context, the two sides expressed expectation to increase the volume of trade and investment between the two countries in the coming years by utilizing mechanisms such as "Japan-Lao PDR Public and Private Dialogue."

Cooperation for Addressing Regional and Global Challenges

14. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong expressed his appreciation for Japan's continued support for ASEAN integration through narrowing development gaps among member countries. The two sides reaffirmed the importance of enhancing common vision and principles for the prosperity and stability in the region, by

promoting regional cooperation through ASEAN-Japan, ASEAN+3, EAS, ARF etc. In this vein, the two sides reaffirmed the significance of implementing “Joint Declaration for Enhancing ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership for Prospering Together (Bali Declaration)” and “ASEAN-Japan Plan of Action Plan for Strategic Partnership 2011-2015” adopted at the fourteenth ASEAN-Japan summit in November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia.

15. Also, mindful of the studies on the East Asia Free Trade Area (EAFTA) and Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia (CEPEA), the two sides reaffirmed their intention to accelerate the discussion of a regional comprehensive economic partnership towards commencing the negotiation and the need to establish ASEAN Plus Working Groups without delay.
16. The two sides reaffirmed the importance of making efforts to enhance ASEAN connectivity towards the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda expressed his intention to further promote concrete cooperation, including assistance towards strengthening ASEAN Connectivity, such as Disaster Management Network for the ASEAN region.
17. In addition, the two sides welcomed the progress of cooperation achieved since the Third Mekong-Japan Summit meeting held in November 2011, and noted that the progress made in the implementation of “Mekong-Japan Action Plan 63” had further contributed to the development of the region. The two sides expressed their commitment to closely coordinate with each other to make the upcoming Fourth Mekong-Japan Summit a success.
18. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda expressed Japan’s support for the Ninth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM9) to be hosted by Lao PDR in 2012. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong extended an invitation to Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda to attend ASEM9. To this, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda appreciated the invitation and stated that he would seriously consider the invitation. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong expressed his appreciation for the cooperation such as Japan’s assistance for the Wattay Vientiane International Airport expansion project and VVIP buildings.
19. The two leaders reaffirmed that the two countries will continue their close contact toward the common goal of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The two sides welcomed the result of the recent dialogue between the United States and North Korea as an important step, and they also confirmed that they

will continue to press for concrete actions including those recently agreed to demonstrate the will to seriously implement the denuclearization and other commitments under the 2005 Six-Party Talks Joint Statement. They reiterated their commitment to fully implementing the relevant UNSC resolutions. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda explained the importance of solving the abduction issue and Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong expressed his understanding and sympathy toward this serious humanitarian issue of concern.

20. The two sides reaffirmed their determination to advance their cooperation for early reform of the UN Security Council. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong reaffirmed Lao PDR's consistent support for Japan's permanent membership in a reformed Security Council as well as Japan's bid for the non-permanent member seat on the Security Council in 2015. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda highly appreciated Lao PDR's continuous support.
21. The two sides expressed their satisfaction and highly commended the outcome of Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong's visit to Japan. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong expressed his appreciation to Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, the Japanese Government and people of Japan for the warm, honored and cordial hospitality extended to him and the Lao delegation. Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong extended an invitation to Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda to visit Lao PDR. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda appreciated the invitation and stated that he would consider it at a good opportunity.

Tokyo, March 16, 2012