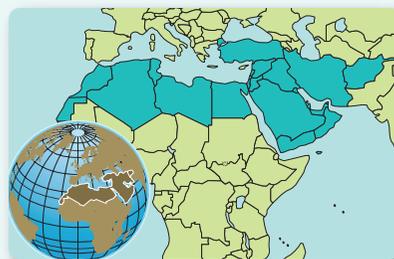


Section 6

The Middle East and North Africa



Overview

The Middle East and North African region is situated in a geopolitically important location at the intersection of Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia. This region contains a major international maritime route for international commerce, and is also an important supplier of energy resources, including oil and natural gas, to the rest of the world. On the other hand, this area is facing a number of challenges that destabilize the region, such as the expansion of extremists including Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the mass refugee outflows, the crisis in Syria, the worsening situation surrounding Iraq, the Iranian nuclear issue, the Middle East Peace Process, and the conditions in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Libya. Realizing peace and stability in this region that confronts these challenges is of great importance for the international community as a whole, including Japan. The global community is also working on the solution to this issue.

Japan relies on this region for more than 80% of its crude oil imports, and has developed relations with the Middle East and North Africa region countries (hereafter referred to as the “Middle East region countries”) that have been centered on resources and energy. Considering such development, Japan builds a more multi-layered relationship that

encompasses resources and energy, as well as wide-ranging economic cooperation, politics and security, and culture and people-to-people exchanges. Since the inauguration of the second Abe administration in December 2012, Prime Minister Abe visited this region six times. Under the concept of the “running mate of the Middle East,” the Government of Japan has made efforts for strengthening the relations with the region through a number of high-level visits, meetings, and talks.

The expansion of extremists including ISIL has been not only significantly undermining the order in the Middle East region but also posing great concern to the entire global society. In a speech on Japan’s policy regarding the Middle East by Prime Minister Abe in January and on other occasions, Japan has indicated its intention to support the construction of societies that do not generate extremism. With the spirit of “the best way is in the middle,” the Government of Japan has provided humanitarian assistance for the refugees and internally displaced persons, the improvement of infrastructure, and the development of human resources. At the same time, Japan severely criticized the despicable acts of terrorism caused by ISIL and other organizations and expressed support for the fight against terrorism in the international community.

The expansion of ISIL has caused a massive influx of refugees from Syria and Iraq to the

European region. During the General Debate at the UN General Assembly in September, Prime Minister Abe expressed support of approximately 810 million US dollars to the refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria, Iraq and neighboring countries. In addition, in January 2016, the Government of Japan decided to provide support of about 350 million US dollars for programs including vocational training and food support to Syria, Iraq and neighboring countries.

Regarding the situation in Syria, Japan has repeatedly expressed at international conferences since 2014 that its contribution centers mainly on humanitarian assistance and political dialogue. In 2015, Japan also provided many assistance programs, including yen loans to Turkey and Jordan, which have been affected by the influx of refugees from Syria. The assistance that Japan has provided to Syria, Iraq and their neighboring countries exceeds 1.2 billion US dollars since 2011, when the crisis in Syria took place.

In relation to the Middle East Peace Process, Japan urged the resumption of peace talks on many occasions, including summit meetings held at the time of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Israel and Palestine in January, and at the summit meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during the 21st United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) held in Paris in November. Furthermore, Japan has made steady progress on its unique efforts to support Palestine, including the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative and the Conference on the Cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD).

In July, Iran and the EU3 (UK, France, and Germany) +3 (U.S., China, and Russia) announced the final agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue. Following the final agreement,

Japan will further strengthen relations with Iran through such means as cooperation to encourage the steady implementation of the final agreement by Iran and the conclusion of the bilateral investment agreement.

In recent years, the Middle East countries have achieved steady economic development with the rapidly growing youth population serving as its driving force and have been increasing their presence as a consumer market and an investment destination. Therefore, Japan has been working on establishing legal frameworks, such as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA), Free Trade Agreements (FTA), investment agreements, and social security agreements, which are foundations for strengthening the economic and business relationships with the Middle East countries. Additionally, Japan has been promoting infrastructure projects in the region. When Prime Minister Abe visited the Middle East region, he was accompanied by an economic delegation comprised of companies from various industries and business categories, from large to medium and small enterprises. This delegation actively made a pitch on Japan's strengths to the leaders and the business community of each country.

1 Iraq

Following the end of the military operation in Iraq in 2003, Iraq has been working on the new nation-building. At the same time, the Government of Iraq put the priority on fighting against terrorism, realizing the national reconciliation among all domestic parties, and handling of financial difficulty due to the drop in oil prices.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has occupied some areas in the northern and western parts of Iraq. The Abadi



administration continued to fight against ISIL and recaptured Tikrit over March and April, while ISIL seized control of Ramadi in May. The fight against ISIL continued a seesaw battle. However, in the latter half of 2015, the Government of Iraq recaptured Baiji at the end of October, and the military units, mainly Peshmerga forces, liberated Sinjar in November. The Government of Iraq has advanced its operations for sweeping ISIL such as regaining control of Ramadi in February 2016.

Prime Minister Abadi intends to work on elimination of the dispute among religious sects and ethnic groups that, in part, triggered ISIL's aggression, hence to promote reconciliation among all domestic parties. Nevertheless, national reconciliation efforts have not delivered a notable achievement at the national level, as indicating the fact that enactment of the important bills such as national guard bill to promote the establishment of so-called Sunni security forces, is postponed. In order to respond to answer the call the Iraqi people and to garner support to the administration, Prime

Minister Abadi issued a Prime Minister's decree in August regarding the reforms in areas such fields as administration and fiscal management. The purpose of this decree is to ensure prosecution and inspection of these personnel involved in corruption, and streamline government function by integrating and abolishing government organizations. However, it will take time for the reforms to be actually implemented.

Iraq is an oil-based economy with approximately 90% of its annual revenue depending on oil. The drop in oil prices and enormous costs of fight against ISIL posed to serious financial difficulties to causing disruptions of its basic administrative services, such as electricity and water. Under the economic structure heavily dependent on oil revenue, however, the government has yet to work out effective counter-measures.

Japan has been maintaining and strengthening a good relationship with Iraq after the end of the military operation in Iraq in 2003. From February to March, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Sonoura visited Baghdad, Basra, and Erbil to exchange views with government officials, and explained Japan's unwavering support for Iraq's fight against extremism.

In October, members of the Japan-Iraq Parliamentary Friendship Association (Chairperson Yuriko Koike: member of the House of Representatives) visited Bagdad when they met Iraqi lawmakers and government officials to enhancement of Parliamentary exchanges between the two countries. Furthermore, in November, the 6th Japan-Iraq Knowledge-Sharing Seminar was held with the aim of promoting reconciliation and rehabilitation in Iraq. Six Iraqi parliamentary members who were from different religious sects were invited.



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Sonoura, visiting a refugee camp at Baharka in the suburbs of Erbil and talking with internally displaced persons (March 15, Iraq)

Japan's experiences of democratization, peace and reconstruction has been shared with the members through the visits to Kyoto and Hiroshima in addition to the talks with government high-level official.

In November, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Jafari visited Japan and had a meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida. The two ministers candidly exchanged their views regarding the fight against ISIL, Syria and regional affairs. Foreign Minister Kishida stated that Japan will support the Government of Iraq, which stands on the front lines of the fight against terrorism and strives to move steadily toward national reconciliation and domestic reforms. He also expressed that Japan will continue to support Iraq in areas including of humanitarian assistance, nation-building and human resource development.

2 Syria

The Syrian Arab Republic has seen a continued violent conflict among the Syrian Government, the so-called moderate rebels, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),

Islamic extremist forces including the Nusra Front, and Kurdish forces. Since September 2014, American troops and other forces have engaged in air raids targeting ISIL, etc., in the territory of Syria, while Russia, requested by the Syrian Government, launched air strikes inside the territory of Syria at the end of September 2015.

To stabilize the situation surrounding Syria, Japan believes the issues have to be basically solved politically in line with the "Geneva Communiqué¹." At the same time, Japan also attaches the importance to continuous support to stave off further aggravation of the situation. From this standpoint, following the aggravated situation in Syria, Japan has provided assistance worth more than 1.2 billion US dollars to Syria, Iraq and neighboring countries by 2015. Since assuming the UN Security Council non-permanent member in 2016, Japan has contributed to the discussion regarding the issue at the UN Security Council. Japan intends to continue its efforts for the improvement and stabilization of the situation surrounding Syria, mainly through humanitarian support which is Japan's strength in closely coordination together with other members of UN Security Council and the international community.

Regarding humanitarian assistance, the Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria (Kuwait III) was held on March 31, 2015, in Kuwait. At the conference Japan announced additional financial assistance of approximately 509 million US dollars in total. This figure includes the yen loan program of the Government of Japan amounting to about 370 million US dollars which is earmarked to improve the

¹ This document was adopted at the Action Group for Syria ("Geneva 1" meeting) on June 30, 2012. It includes the process of administration transition in Syria, including the establishment of a transitional governing body.



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Muto, announcing a statement at the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference (February 4, 2016, London, UK)

infrastructure of local authorities in Turkey, which has been affected by the influx of Syrian refugees. In May, Japan provided a yen loan program amounting to about 200 million US dollars for the stabilization of the economy and finances of Jordan, which has also been affected by the Syrian refugees. While the number of refugees from Syria exceeded four million as of the middle of July, Japan decided to provide assistance of about 12 million US dollars in total to Syrian refugees, internally displaced people, and the host communities by September mainly through international agencies and NGOs in Japan. Furthermore, at the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference held in London in February 2016, Japan made an announcement that it will newly provide assistance amounting to about 350 million US dollars to Syria, Iraq and neighboring states. Amid the prolonged crisis, Japan has provided not only short-term assistance to Syria such as health, hygiene and food, but also mid- to long-term assistance such as education and vocational training for self-reliance of repatriated refugees, improvement of living environment for refugees and host communities and infrastructure development. As Prime Minister Abe stated at the UN

General Assembly at the end of September, Japan will work on the assistance through the collaboration between humanitarian and development actors.

The political process in Syria was halted. In 2015, the necessity of a political solution to the crisis in Syria was recognized again in the wake of the influx of many refugees and immigrants including Syrian refugees into Europe, and Russia's launch of air strikes in Syria. During October and November, several foreign ministers' meetings regarding on Syria were held in Vienna. In the meeting held on November 14, a statement was released by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) to ensure political transition led by Syria under the UN. Based on this, an ISSG meeting was held in New York on December 18. On the same day, the UN Security Council resolution 2254, the first resolution regarding a political process after the crisis in Syria, was adopted unanimously. The Resolution requested the Secretary-General to convene representatives from the Syrian Government and the opposition groups to engage in formal negotiation with a target of early January 2016 for the initiation of talks. It also requested the Secretary-General to report to the UN Security Council within one month after the adoption of the Resolution regarding options for ceasefire monitoring, verification, and reporting mechanisms. Thus, it called upon the implementation the Syrian-led political process under the UN based on "Geneva Communiqué" of June 2012 and the statement by ISSG on November 14, 2015.

The issue of chemical weapons (CW) is handled in accordance with the decision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in September 2013 and the UN Security Council Resolution 2118 on September 27. The destruction work

was almost complete for the chemical agents and compounds that had been transferred outside Syria by June 2014. The removal work is also close to completion at CW production facilities inside Syria. Chlorine has been used repeatedly as a weapon in Syria. Subject to the UN Security Council Resolution 2235 in August 2015, a UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism was established to identify persons responsible for use of chemical weapons in Syria.

3 Iran

Iran is a major power with a large number of Shia-Muslim population. It has approximately 4.4 times the size of Japan with a population of about 80 million, and is blessed with abundant natural resources. Japan has maintained and strengthened a historically friendly relationship with Iran from the viewpoints of stable supply of crude oil and the stability of the Middle East region. With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, Japan has been contributing to a peaceful and diplomatic solution of the issue in coordination with the international community from its unique position.

The Rouhani administration, which took office in August 2013 engaged in the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear issue with the EU3 (UK, France, and Germany) +3 (U.S., China, and Russia). In November, the Government of Iran released the “Joint Plan of Action,” which consisted of “elements of a first step” and “elements of the final step of a comprehensive solution.” The negotiations aimed at a comprehensive agreement started from February 2014. In April 2015, the parties reached an agreement regarding the main elements which would then serve as a basis for the final agreement. In July,

they have reached an agreement on “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)” in Vienna.

In order to resolve the regional and international issues including the nuclear issue, Japan has been urging Iran to promote confidence-building with international community and the regional countries, and to play a constructive role in stabilizing the region. Also, Japan has been reinforcing traditional relations with Iran through the framework of high-level political exchange and multi-layered dialogue. Japan-Iran Summit Meeting was held on the margin of the Asia-Africa Conference in Jakarta in April 2015. A summit meeting was also held at the UN General Assembly for the fourth time (in New York, US) in September. In October 2015, Foreign Minister Kishida made second visit to Iran for the first time in two years. A joint statement was issued following the (fifth) meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Mohammad Zarif, in which the ministers confirmed to cooperate in such fields as nuclear safety, to sign and put into force the Japan-Iran Investment Agreement (which reached substantial agreement in the same month) as early as possible, and to establish the Japan-Iran Cooperation Council. At the visit, Foreign Minister Kishida had talks with President Hassan Rouhani, as well as meetings with economy-related ministers with the participation of the business executives from Japan (consisting of the representatives from about 20 companies).

In addition to the existing dialogue, the fields of cooperation has been expanding with active cooperation based on memoranda between health and environment authorities of both countries and with “Memorandum of Cooperation in the Field of Higher Education and Scientific Research” being signed.

There were also active high-level visits from Iran were also actively arranged with a view to further strengthen the bilateral relationship: Minister of Health Seyed Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi in February, Minister of Science, Research and Technology Mohammad Farhadi in October, and Vice-President and Head of Atomic Energy Organization Ali Akbar Salehi in November.

4 Afghanistan

At the end of September 2014, the National Unity Government (NUG) was inaugurated after agreeing a power-sharing arrangement between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. The NUG continues to face significant challenges in 2015.

Securing the self-reliance of and stability in Afghanistan is crucially important for the stability of the entire international community including Japan and the prosperity of the region. However, there have been frequent terrorist attacks by the armed insurgencies including Taliban. On September 28, the Taliban conducted intense attacks to Kunduz (the Afghanistan's fifth largest city) in northeastern Afghanistan and temporarily captured the city. There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). At the beginning of 2015, the "Resolute Support Mission (RSM)" started its operations by succeeding the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). RSM provides training and advice to ANDSF with about 13,000 foreign military personnel from NATO member states including the U.S. as well as other partner countries.

The NUG has pursued reconciliation with the Taliban in order to achieve long-term

stability in the country, however, there have not been major achievements. On July 8, a peace talk between the Taliban and the Government of Afghanistan was convened through mediation by Pakistan. On July 29, it was announced that Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Omar had died more than two years ago and this was later confirmed by the Taliban. Confusions after this announcement led to postponing of the second round of the peace talks which were already-scheduled. On December 2, there was a media report saying that the new Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor was reportedly injured in an internal fight. This might suggest a problem in solidarity inside the Taliban.

In terms of the governance, the appointment process of new ministers was delayed after the inauguration of the NUG. The important position of the NUG's defense minister has been vacant because the lower house did not approve the nomination to this day only acting Defense Minister has been appointed. Due to the delay in electoral system reform, the parliamentary election was yet to be held even after the expiration of the term of for the members of the lower house representatives in June.

Contrary to the efforts by the Government of Afghanistan for realizing economic self-reliance by improving security situation and combating corruption, the GDP growth for 2014 slowed down to 1.3% (3.7% for the previous year). Also, the employment situation was not improved. Pervasive frustration in the general public has been clearly observed. For example, a massive anti-government protest took place in the capital, Kabul, on November 11.

In efforts to support Afghanistan's self-reliance and prevent it from slipping back to

a hotbed of terrorism, Japan has provided a total of 5.9 billion US dollars assistance mainly in the fields of security and development since 2001.

5 Middle East Peace Process

(1) Developments in Middle East Peace Process

The U.S. mediation led to direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine from July 2013 to April 2014. However, they faltered in the face of a wide gap in the positions of the two sides, and the negotiations have been discontinued since then.

On December 30, 2014, the UN Security Council rejected the Security Council resolution about the Middle East peace process. Following this, Palestine applied for membership of some international treaties, including the International Criminal Court in January 2015. The Israel side took countermeasures (which were withdrawn later).

Under such circumstances, local security has been worsening in Israel and at the West Bank since around September; murder and injury cases against Israelis by Palestinians and frequent collisions around Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem took place. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has been deteriorating as well.

The international community urged both Israel and Palestine to resume the negotiations at an early date. In particular, France called for forming an “International Support Group” in an attempt to break through the status quo the Middle East faces. Based on this attempt as well, the meeting of the enlarged Middle East Quartet was held at the time of the UN General Assembly in September. Foreign Minister Kishida attended this meeting as a



Dome of the Rock in “Haram al-Sharif”



Agricultural processing complex project in Jericho, Palestine



The Gaza Strip, apparently lagging behind in the pace of rehabilitation

representative of the Government of Japan, stressing that the issue of Middle East peace is one of the top priority issues for this region. He also made clear that Japan will provide new assistance to Palestine in the magnitude of about 12 million US dollars, and that it is necessary to get a range of countries involved

in the peace process.

(2) The Japanese Government's Efforts

In cooperation with the international community, Japan approached Israel and Palestine to achieve a “two-state solution.” Political dialogues were conducted at all levels involving the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and special envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East peace. Japan also endeavored to contribute to confidence-building between Israel and Palestine by inviting relevant people from both sides to Japan.

In January, Prime Minister Abe met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel and President Mahmond Abbas in Palestine, directly urging both leaders to advance the process for a solution to the Middle East issue. In November, Prime Minister Abe further urged Prime Minister Netanyahu to work with the process when he attended COP21 held in Paris. When Foreign Affairs Minister Riad Malki visited Japan in February, Foreign Minister Kishida encouraged his counterpart to deal flexibly with the issue and resume the negotiations at an early date.

Japan's support for Palestine since 1993 amounts to 1.6 billion US dollars, covering humanitarian support, job creation, healthcare, agriculture, and a variety of fields. The “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” initiative is Japan's unique effort to address Palestine's economic self-sustainability specifically in cooperation with Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. A flagship project of this initiative is Jericho Agro-industrial Park, for which the Government of Japan accelerates its efforts and the first company launched full-fledged operation 2015.

Under the framework of the “Cooperation

among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD)” aiming to mobilize Asian countries for practical assistance to Palestine, the Government of Japan engages in tripartite cooperation with Asian nations by organizing agriculture training projects and tourism seminars.

6 Countries in the Middle East and North Africa

(1) Turkey

Turkey is a large and geopolitically important country located at the crossroads to Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Caucasia. The country assumed the chairmanship of G20 in December 2014, and its presence in the international community has been increasing.

In the elections held in June, the Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) failed to obtain the majority of seats for the first time since 2002 when the party took over the reign of government. The discussion between the ruling and opposition parties for a coalition administration did not reach an agreement, and President Recep Erdogan decided to hold a re-election. The re-election took place in November, where AKP again obtained 317 seats, more than the majority, and a new administration headed by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu started.

As a member state of NATO, the Government of Turkey basically attaches importance to Europe and U.S. in its diplomacy, including efforts to join EU. The AKP administration proactively promotes multiple diplomacies with states covering Asia and Africa including its efforts to stabilize the neighboring region and strengthen the relationship. On the other hand, in recent years, the relations between Turkey and Syria, particularly under the Assad Administration,



Japan-Turkey Summit Meeting (October 8, Tokyo; Photo: Cabinet Public Relations Office)

have deteriorated. Turkey faces many problems, including the fight against ISIL and terrorists, accepting more than two million Syrian refugees as the largest host country in the world. After the downing of a Russian fighter jet in November 2015, tension with Russia has been increasing.

In respect of the relationship with Japan, the year 2015 marked the 125th anniversary of the Ertugrul Frigate Disaster, which is believed to be a keystone of Japanese-Turkish friendship. The year also marked the 30th anniversary since Japanese hostages in Teheran were rescued. Commemorating these events, many mutual visits and anniversary programs were organized. On the summit-level, President Erdogan visited Japan as a guest on Official Working Visits in October, and Prime Minister Abe visited Istanbul in November and attended the G20 Antalya summit, confirming the high trust between the two leaders.

(2) Jordan and Lebanon

The situation in Jordan is stable in the constantly turbulent Middle East region. Jordan has played an important role in the peace and stability of the region, such as with countermeasures against extremists, its acceptance of a number of Syrian refugees,

and active involvement in the Middle East peace process. The country's role is highly appreciated by the international community.

Prime Minister Abe visited Jordan in January 2015, and had talks during a working lunch at the Asia-Africa Conference (in Jakarta, Indonesia) in April and the UN General Assembly (in New York, U.S.) in September. Traditionally friendly bilateral relations have deepened even further. At each meeting, the leaders shared the view of cooperating for further development of the bilateral relations and stabilization of the Middle East region.

Japan also attaches importance to Jordan, which serves as a cornerstone for the stability of the region. The Government of Japan has been providing assistance for the stability of Jordan through support for refugees and host communities, as well as for developing the industrial base. In 2015, Japan provided a "Fiscal and Public Service Reform Development Policy Loan" (24 billion yen) in loans, as well as non-project grant aid (two billion yen).

Lebanon is a mosaic nation consisting of 18 religions and religious sects, including Christianity and Islam. Due to the confrontation between each sect and political force, no successor to President Michel Suleiman, whose term of office ended in May 2014, has been elected yet (as of December 2015). The tenure of the incumbent parliament members was again extended to June 2017 as well. There is no prospect of an election, either.

In August, demonstrations in the range of a few to ten thousand protesters took place, sparked by a garbage-collection crisis at the central part of the capital Beirut. Many individuals were injured in collisions between demonstrators and the Security Forces, showing the internal instability. In November, a terrorist bombing occurred with

many casualties in the south suburb of Beirut. The deteriorating situation in Syria and the expansion of ISIL are serious problems that could significantly affect the region. Facing these issues, stability in Lebanon is the key to the stability and prosperity of the Middle East. Japan has provided Lebanon with humanitarian aid of 77.95 million US dollars for assistance to Syrian refugees in total.

(3) Egypt

Located at the north-eastern edge of the African continent and facing Europe on the other side of the Mediterranean, Egypt is a large country which plays an important role for the stability of the Middle East and North Africa.

Parliamentary elections were conducted from October to December 2015 as the final stage of the “road map” which had been developed after the political turmoil in 2013.

Prime Minister Abe visited Egypt in January and had talks with Egyptian President Adel Fattah el-Sisi and Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab. They issued a comprehensive joint statement to deepen the bilateral ties in the future. At a Joint Meeting of the Japan-Egypt Business Committee, Prime Minister Abe delivered a policy speech entitled “Moderation is the best policy: Toward a Vigorous and Stable Middle East - Japan and Egypt, Turning a New Page.” On behalf of the Government of Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Sonoura attended the Egypt Economic Development Conference in March and the New Canal Inauguration Ceremony in August. Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry visited Japan in November and had a working lunch meeting with Foreign Minister Kishida. He also paid a courtesy call on visit to Prime Minister Abe. Also, there has been a growing cooperation

in the field of security. Following the first political and security dialogue and defense dialogue which were held in October 2015, ADM Katsutoshi Kawano, Chief of Staff, Joint-Staff of the Japan Self-Defense Force visited Egypt in December and met with Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces Mahmoud Hegazy.

(4) Maghreb

The Maghreb is located at the crossroads to Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and has shared commonality in history, culture and language. Recently it has increasingly attracted attention because of a potential as a region particularly in the area of economy. On the other hand, many people move from the region to Iraq and Syria as ISIL foreign fighters, and the emerging threat of Islamic extremists poses a serious problem.

In Tunisia, a new coalition consisting of secular Islamists and moderate Islamists was formed in February. As a result, the political process to democratization was accomplished after four years. However, terrorist attacks targeting tourists and government officials have been taking place, and security is of urgent priority.

Libya has fallen into a situation of serious conflict among several groups rooted in tribes and has experienced security deterioration. Domestically, west (Tori Bori) and east (Tobruk) factions led to the formation of two governments. ISIL is also active taking advantage of the lack of an integrated national authority. In December, as a result of mediation efforts by the international community centered around the UN over one year, the documents on a political agreement for establishing a united government was signed. Not only for the stability of the country but also for the neighboring region,

the Government of Libya is expected to transform itself into a state where all political forces act as a monolithic entity with support from the international community.

The Government of Algeria has initiated various reforms, including an amendment to the constitution. Morocco has sustained robust economic growth. In cooperation with the UN, the two countries make efforts to contribute to peace and stability of the region by mediating the domestic confrontations in Libya and Mali.

(5) Gulf countries (including Yemen)

A Six Gulf countries (the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain)

While the Middle East faces many security challenges, the Gulf countries which proclaim themselves as moderate and stabilizing forces of the region, have been promoting mutual solidarity to counter the violent extremism and to promote moderate thought. Japan recognizes these countries as important partners from the viewpoints of energy security and diplomacy toward the Middle East. There were frequent mutual visits of dignitaries such as the visit of Emir of the State of Qatar Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani to Japan in February 2015.

These states need to review their fiscal policy following a dip in their annual revenue due to sluggish international oil prices since summer 2014. In the long run, they attach importance to such issues as social and economic infrastructure development, industrial diversification, and human resource development with a view to overcoming dependence on oil and to develop the private sector. Japan engages in improving the mutual business and investment environment through various agreements being concluded

with the countries, while continuing to aim to strengthen the “Comprehensive Partnerships” in a range of fields beyond the energy area. Also, Japan and Saudi Arabia held commemorating events since the year 2015 marked the 60th anniversary for the establishments of Japan and Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations.

B Yemen

Since January 2015, the Houthi, a Shiite military group, advanced into the capital Sanaa, then Aden, which forced President Hadi to evacuate country. The Government of Yemen with military assistance from the Arab coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia regained control over southern five prefectures, including Aden, by September and this led to President Hadi's return to Aden. In December, the peace talks were held under the UN mediation efforts.

The Government of Japan continued assistance to overcome Yemeni humanitarian crisis through efforts such as providing an emergency assistance to the refugees and internally displaced persons in May, and announcing a new food assistance at the Meeting on the Humanitarian Situation in Yemen at the UN General Assembly in September. Furthermore, Minister of Information, Nadia Sakkaf visited Japan in August.

Issues regarding Syrian refugees and Japan's efforts

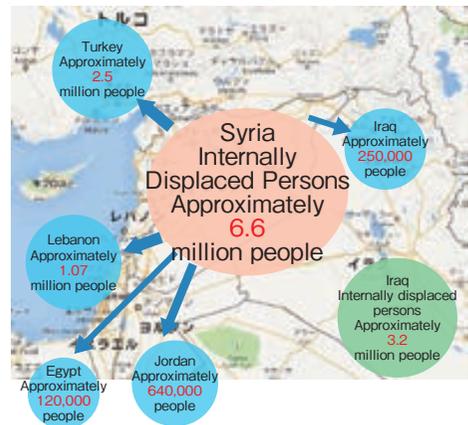
Located in the Fertile Crescent region spreading from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the Nile River, Syria has been an agricultural country since the ancient Orient era. The country also boasts a long history and culture, with world cultural heritage such as the Site of Palmyra, which was a flourishing relay city on the Silk Road.

In March 2011, a crisis struck people living in Syria. Since then, more than 250,000 people have died in Syria, more than 6.6 million people have been internally displaced and more than 4.6 million people fled out to neighboring countries as refugees (as of February 2016, UN statistics), caused by fierce fightings. This situation still continues with no signs of abating. Some Syrian refugees are living in refugee camps, but many of them are living outside the refugee camps. They have been forced to lead a hard life in each of their evacuation destinations.

Amid the prolonged Syria crisis, the countries surrounding Syria (See the figure) have accepted a large number of refugees almost to the limits of their capacity, causing such problems as friction between the refugees and the host communities. Also, the refugees and immigrants entering European countries increased explosively in 2015. Many of them are recognized as refugees from Syria.

At the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, Prime Minister Abe in September 2015 committed to implement financial support of about \$810 million for refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria and Iraq. And as part of new assistance in Lebanon, Prime Minister also announced to promote collaboration between humanitarian assistance and development assistance and provide about \$2.5 million in humanitarian aid to countries neighboring the European Union (EU) such as Serbia and Macedonia, which cannot enjoy the EU safety net despite being located on the migration route of refugees and immigrants (in November, Japan announced to provide additional aid of about \$2.7 million for the countries neighboring the EU). As long as the Syria crisis continues, the international community needs to continue assistance for Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons and the host countries. At the same time, to genuinely solve the problems regarding Syrian refugees, political solution for Syria crisis is essential. To this end, it is expected to take a certain amount of time, but while a growing number of Syrian refugees cannot receive enough education due to the protracted crisis. It is important to develop human resources through the support of education and vocational training so that reconstruction can be executed when the Syria crisis ends and Syrian refugees return to their home country in the future. In particular, education for young people helps prevent them from being exposed to extremism. Japan intends to continue implementing support for

the future of Syria, including education and vocational training, in addition to urgently needed assistance, such as health, sanitation, and food assistance, based on the idea of improving the situation by thinking about the root causes of the problem thoroughly so that the refugees can return to Syria in the future and rebuild the country as used to be colored by the grace of rich history and blessed with gifts from the land again.



Sources: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) / Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (As of February 7, 2016; including the number of refugees awaiting registration)

Situation of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons



Refugee registration center in Jordan