

Joint Press Release on the Enhancement of Bilateral Relationship Between Japan and the Republic of Iraq

January 10, 2017

1 On January 10, 2017, H.E. Mr. Kentaro Sonoura, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan visited the Republic of Iraq, Baghdad, and exchanged views with the Iraqi side on bilateral relations as well as on issues of mutual concern.

2 The Iraqi side welcomed the visit of the Japanese side, which symbolizes the steadfast relationship between Japan and Iraq at this critical time as the fight against terrorism progresses in Iraq. The Japanese side reaffirmed Japan's solidarity with Iraq in its efforts to fight against terrorism, stabilize liberated areas, and improve humanitarian situations in Iraq. The Iraqi side also emphasized that Iraq is a responsible partner in the fight against terrorism.

3 At this meeting, both sides appreciated the progress that Japan and Iraq have made thus far in their bilateral relations. Both sides also shared the recognition that both countries will make further efforts to enhance bilateral exchanges in a wide range of fields so that both countries can forge tangible successes towards November 2019 when both countries celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

4 Both sides noted with appreciation that the two countries have steadily enhanced their bilateral relationship over the past decades. Both sides also shared the view that there is great potential in the bilateral relationship between Japan and Iraq and reconfirmed their determination to continue to further efforts.

5 The Iraqi side welcomed the official opening of the Consular Office of Japan in Erbil on January 1, 2017. Both sides expressed their shared hope that the establishment of the Consular Office will bring momentum to enhance and broaden the bilateral relationship between Japan and Iraq.

6 The Japanese side expressed his concern about the serious humanitarian crises associated with counter-terrorism operations, and announced Japan's intention to make additional contributions of approximately 100 million US dollars for humanitarian assistance and support for the stabilization of liberated areas through international organizations upon approval of the supplemental budget by the Japanese Diet. The

Japanese side informed the Iraqi side that the notes concerning a Japanese yen loan up to approximately 27.2 billion yen for the Electricity Sector Reconstruction Project (Phase 3) has been signed and exchanged, and also expressed Japan's intention to extend a new yen loan up to approximately 21.5 billion yen for a project to rehabilitate a thermal power station in Basra Province. The Iraqi side appreciated the expansion and development of the Japanese assistance to Iraq in various fields including its stabilization support of liberated areas and expressed deep gratitude to the people and Government of Japan. The Iraqi side also hoped that more international efforts will be made to rehabilitate basic infrastructure and improve essential public services in Iraq.

7 Both sides affirmed to accelerate the bilateral consultations towards the conclusion of an agreement on technical cooperation so as to build the foundation for such cooperation between the two countries.

8 Both sides appreciated the ongoing activities of Japanese companies in Iraq despite the current security challenges, noting particularly the large participation of Japanese companies at the Baghdad International Fair 2016. Both sides also shared the view on the significance of measures to accelerate such activities, including the improvement of the investment climate in Iraq. The Iraqi side called for Japanese companies to increase their presence in Iraq.

9 In this regard, both sides welcomed that the project of building substations for the financing by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), which would be the first project, will be implemented in the near future after the continuous consultations among the relevant officials of the two countries.

10 Both sides decided that competent authorities will launch consultations for making specific steps for enhancing bilateral exchanges, particularly in the fields of primary and secondary education, academic exchange, exchanges between universities, and sports, with a view to realizing the further deepening of the exchanges towards the eightieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

11 In the field of academic exchanges, both sides confirmed their shared intention to promote cooperation between the two Ministries to support the convening of Symposia for Academic Exchanges once a year in each country depending on safety consideration.

12 Both sides affirmed their intention to continue consultations on cooperative

measures that will provide a firmer basis for bilateral people-to-people exchanges, recognizing that the increasing such peoples' exchanges between the two countries is the key to further enhance bilateral relations in the future. In this respect, the Japanese side emphasized that it is important for Iraq to further accelerate and simplify its visa issuance procedures, including the repeal of non-HIV certificate obligations for visa upon entry request and to facilitate the immigration procedures.

13 The Japanese side, taking this opportunity, announced that Japan will start to examine concrete steps to normalize visa issuance at the Embassy of Japan in Baghdad by November 2019, when Japan and Iraq will celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and requested the assistance from the Iraqi Government to this end.