

## Message from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the Occasion of 8<sup>th</sup> ACMECS Summit Meeting

June 16, 2018

Mr. Chairman, H.E. General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand,

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia,

H. E. Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR,

H. E. U Win Myint, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar,

H. E. Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam,

distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to congratulate you all on the convening of this 8<sup>th</sup> ACMECS Summit Meeting.

I myself have been to the Mekong countries on various occasions. These countries are blessed with young talent, great natural beauty and vibrant cities. I am confident that the Mekong region has a promising future ahead. Together with the Mekong countries, Japan hopes to achieve peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

The ACMECS Master Plan, to be adopted at this Summit meeting, is extremely important for the future of this region. Japan's assistance to the region is closely in line with the three pillars outlined in the Master Plan, which are Seamless Infrastructure Development, Enhancing "Soft" Connectivity and Human Resource Development. That is why Japan has supported the adoption of the Master Plan from the early stage of its inception over a year ago.

Furthermore Japan considers it essential that we bring "vibrant connectivity to the region. That is to say, we should make the best use of infrastructure development and directly link this to regional economic growth. That is why Japan is not only supporting the construction of quality infrastructure such as roads, railways, ports and bridges but also the training of personnel to maintain this infrastructure, the improvement of customs systems and the creation

of an investment friendly business environment.

The key to development, I believe, is the people. Japan has been committed to industrial human resource development through, for instance, dispatching experts, Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers as well as through on-the-job training provided by Japanese enterprises. I am proud of these contributions that Japan has been able to make and convinced that they have played an important part in the regional development.

Moreover, in recent years, the number of students coming to study in Japan from the Mekong region has been increasing rapidly. I hope that these students, having gained a deeper understanding of people and culture of both Japan and their native countries, will become bridges among our countries and thrive as the future leaders of the region.

The Indo-Pacific region is indeed the world's growth center, and as such it is critical that we make this region free and open, as well as maintain and strengthen the international order that serves as the foundation of peace and prosperity in the region. In this regard, Japan will continue to support capacity building in areas such as humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction, as well as maritime law enforcement in each country of the region.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my cordial invitation to the leaders of the Mekong countries to come to Japan later this year to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Summit. I am looking forward to welcoming you all and to having fruitful discussions on the future of the Mekong countries and Japan.