

**CEAPADIII opening session**  
**Statement by Foreign Minister Kono**  
**(June 27, 2018 Bangkok)**

- Your Excellency Air Chief Marshal Prajin Juntong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Thailand, Your Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, Your Excellency Dr. Riad Al-Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine, Your Excellency Ms. Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.
- First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for all the efforts made by the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand in hosting this conference. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of you for being here today, in Bangkok, for the third Ministerial Conference on the Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, or CEAPAD III.
- It has been 5 years since the launch of CEAPAD. We have East Asian countries that have realized dramatic economic development, each with strong areas to be proud of. And we have Palestine, which has actively promoted investment in its “people” for its future nation building. We are proud that Japan and East Asian countries have been cooperating to provide various assis for Palestinian people through CEAPAD.
- I am sad to say that, at this moment, we cannot be optimistic about the situation surrounding the Middle East Peace Process including the recent situation in Gaza. Palestine continues to face a difficult situation. I believe however it is important, especially during this severe time, to continue developing human resources and sharing experiences through CEAPAD step by step. The accumulation of these experiences will provide a solid foundation for promoting the development of the Palestinian economy, which will in turn create an environment where Palestinian youth can continue to have hope and

strive for the achievement of a “Two State Solution.”

- I hereby report that Japan has exceeded its commitments from the last CEAPAD Ministerial Meeting in Jakarta in 2014, in providing training to 1,500 Palestinians over five years. This effort includes trilateral cooperation with Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Japan’s assistance to Palestine since 1993 has reached almost 2 billion U.S. dollars.
- I would like to remind you of a particularly important agenda here. We are deeply concerned about the situation of Palestinian refugees affected by the severe situation surrounding the Middle East Peace Process and the Syrian crisis. The situation is getting more and more difficult. UNRWA, which is mandated to help these Palestinian refugees, is now facing a serious financial crisis.
- I myself had a chance to visit an elementary school run by UNRWA, in a refugee camp in Bethlehem. Education is an investment for the future of all refugee children. These works of UNRWA contribute to preventing violent extremism, and UNRWA’s role is getting more and more significant as a barrier against further instability in the region.
- South East Asia also faces the expansion of extremism. It is highly important that UNRWA maintain its activities from the perspective of preventing terrorism. We can say that UNRWA’s activities are directly connected to Asia. I would like to call up on all CEAPAD members and observers here to jointly support UNRWA.
- Considering UNRWA’s positive role for stabilization of the region, Japan will continue our support for UNRWA. We have just decided to extend an additional assistance of approximately 15 million USD. UNRWA’s financial crisis requires the international community as a whole to work it out together.
- Palestine is at the first priority of my Middle East policy. In April, I

hosted a Ministerial Meeting at the Dead Sea to discuss Japan's "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity", and its flagship project, "Jericho Agro-Industrial Park," which is known as JAIP. We were honored to have the presence of H.E. Dr. Malki, co-chair of today's meeting there, together with Israeli and Jordanian Ministers.

- When I visited the Agro-Industrial Park in 2010, I found nothing but a single road. The small seed has grown into a plant bearing fruit over the years. Now, we have 12 Palestinian companies operating at the Industrial Park and creating job opportunities for Palestinians.
- Last December, I announced plans to upgrade this "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative, expecting the products to be exported out of Palestine to the world including Asia.
- One important area in this upgrade is in the information and communication technology, or ICT, sector. We find plenty of talented youth in Palestine, living in a restricted environment. ICT can connect these Palestinians with the rest of the world. We are planning to assist ICT education and business start-ups. We plan to hold an ICT business competition next September there. We hope such events will attract interests in ICT start-ups. We will invite the winner to Japan.
- We will also support upgrading the King Hussain/ Allenby border facility and facilitate the logistics on both sides of the Jordan river, for smooth export of products.
- Each CEAPAD member has a robust private sector. We hope the vitality of your private sector, whether it be in the ICT sector or the agriculture sector, will contribute to further promotion of the project. As a first step, we would like to propose a CEAPAD joint tour to Palestine. We would like you to visit the Agro-Industrial Park, an example of a successful cooperation project in Palestine.
- We prepared a promotion booth for the Agro-Industrial Park just

outside the conference room today. We would like you to take a look during the break.

- There is huge potential for CEAPAD. There is huge expectation from Palestine. Today, South East Asia hosts the biggest Islamic community in the world. It is high time for us, Asians, to stand up for peace in the Middle East, including preventing extremism. I am encouraged by the fact that so many East Asian friends have gathered together to show solidarity for Palestine and to extend support to Palestine's nation building efforts. If we pull our efforts together, we can make a huge difference.
- I hope today's discussion will have a positive impact on the international community's efforts towards a "Two State Solution", and give hope to the Palestinian people.

(End)