

# **Tokyo Strategy 2018 for Mekong-Japan Cooperation**

October 9, 2018

The Heads of State/Government of Japan, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam met in Tokyo on 9 October 2018 for the tenth Mekong Japan Summit and hereby adopted the "Tokyo Strategy 2018 for Mekong-Japan Cooperation."

## **I Achievements and Future Directions of the Mekong-Japan cooperation**

1. The Leaders of the Mekong countries and Japan (hereinafter referred to as "Leaders") highly valued the contribution the Mekong-Japan cooperation has made to the peace, stability and prosperity in the region since the first Mekong-Japan Summit in 2009. Celebrating the success of the eleventh Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting held this year in Singapore and noting with satisfaction its Chair's Statement including the review of the Japan-Mekong Connectivity Initiative, Leaders commended the achievements of the "New Tokyo Strategy 2015," Japan's completed commitment to implement official development assistance (ODA) on a scale exceeding 750 billion Japanese Yen during the last three years and promotion of connectivity enhancement through quality infrastructure. The Mekong countries expressed their deep gratitude to Japan for its longstanding support in the Mekong-Japan cooperation, and, on the tenth anniversary of the Mekong-Japan cooperation, Leaders decided to elevate the relationship between Japan and the Mekong countries to the strategic partnership.

2. Against this background, Leaders concurred in updating Mekong-Japan Cooperation to make it more relevant in the current regional and global situation. Based on the recommendations at the eleventh Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Leaders decided to establish three new main pillars of Mekong-Japan Cooperation; Vibrant and Effective Connectivity, People-Centered Society, and Realization of a Green Mekong. Moreover, Leaders also shared the recognition that Mekong-Japan Cooperation should contribute to peace, stability and prosperity not only in the region but also worldwide. To that end, Leaders decided to implement the Mekong-Japan Cooperation projects as the Action Plan for realization of the Tokyo Strategy 2018 in synergy with the following

initiatives.

*Mekong-Japan Cooperation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

3. Leaders reaffirmed that promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to realize the society in which “no one left behind” based on among others the concept of human security taking into account the specificities of the Mekong countries, is a key to make the Mekong region further sustainable, diverse and inclusive. Recognizing that three pillars of Mekong-Japan cooperation below have a common ground with those of the SDGs Model that Japan is pursuing as well as ASEAN’s ongoing work on narrowing the development gap and promoting the complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Leaders expressed their determination to cooperate for achieving the SDGs in the Mekong region. In this regard, Leaders identified the Mekong-Japan cooperation projects for the SDGs, which contribute to realizing the SDGs in the region (Annex1). Building upon this compilation of projects and taking into account new challenges faced by the region, Leaders decided to upgrade the current Action Plan for “A Decade toward the Green Mekong” by 2020 to “Mekong-Japan Initiative for SDGs toward 2030” at the eleventh Mekong Japan Summit in order to ensure achieving SDGs in the region, and tasked the senior officials meeting (SOM) to start discussions on it.

*Mekong-Japan Cooperation and Free and Open Indo-Pacific*

4. Leaders underscored the importance of continued efforts of each country to reinforce a free and open order based on the rule of law to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region, and affirmed that the Mekong region, linking the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, has the geographical advantage of receiving considerable benefits from the realization of a free and open Indo-Pacific. In this regard, Leaders of the Mekong countries welcomed Japan’s policy to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific to contribute to the peace, stability and prosperity in the region and the world. Leaders expressed their determination to steadily implement the Mekong-Japan Cooperation projects which contribute to and complement the promotion of a free and open Indo-Pacific (Annex2).

*Mekong-Japan Cooperation and Ayeyawady – Chao Phraya – Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS)*

5. Japan highly values ACMECS as Mekong countries’ own initiative and found it desirable and effective to seek synergies between the Mekong-Japan cooperation and

the ACMECS. Leaders applauded the work of compiling Mekong-Japan Cooperation projects that would serve the realization of the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023) (Annex3). The Mekong countries welcomed Japan's intention to participate in ACMECS-related meetings to advance coordination between the Mekong Japan Cooperation and ACMECS.

6. In order to steadily implement concrete Mekong-Japan Cooperation projects set out in ANNEX 1 to 3, Leaders took note of the importance of collaboration among implementing agencies as well as cooperation with Multilateral Development Banks and regional stakeholders as follows: collaboration between Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) and between JICA and Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) under respective partnership arrangements; coordination with Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and the ASEAN Promotion Centre on Trade, Investment and Tourism (ASEAN-Japan Centre); and cooperation with regional cooperation frameworks and programs including Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program (GMS), and the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI).

## **II Three New Pillars of Mekong-Japan Cooperation**

### **A. Vibrant and Effective Connectivity**

7. The Mekong sub-region connects emerging mega-markets: China, India and other ASEAN countries. An industrial structure that is optimal and complementary with these three growing markets could vitalize the Mekong sub-region as the center of the emerging Asian mega-markets. Therefore, it is essential to advance the industrial structure and improve the value-chain network in the Mekong region and beyond. Leaders reaffirmed the importance of further enhancing "Hard Connectivity", "Soft Connectivity", and "Industry Connectivity" in the Mekong region and beyond, thus vibrant and effective connectivity remains a main pillar of the Mekong-Japan Cooperation. In this regard, the leaders of the Mekong countries emphasized the need to reinforce Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) which has contributed to enhancing connectivity in and beyond ASEAN. Leaders expressed their intention to bolster their efforts in enhancing connectivity, particularly through promotion of the "quality infrastructure" in accordance with the international standards and the development of

the “Mekong Industrial Development Vision 2.0” with its “Early Implementation Measures,” bearing in mind the needs and priorities of the region. In this connection, Leaders welcomed ASEAN’s establishment of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN) with 14 ASCN pilot cities in the Mekong region. Japan expressed interest in stepping up its support for smart cities development in Mekong. Furthermore, Leaders instructed Ministers and officials to exert utmost efforts to achieve the substantial conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement negotiations within this year, which would also enhance supply chain in the Mekong region and beyond.

### **A.1 Hard Connectivity**

8. Leaders welcomed the progress made thus far in physical infrastructure development which contributes to enhancing land, maritime and air connectivity, and reaffirmed their strong commitment, inter alia, to fill the missing links of the East-West and Southern Economic Corridors. To this end, Leaders reaffirmed the importance of promoting the international standards of “quality infrastructure” development such as openness, transparency, economic viability, social and environmental considerations, financial soundness of recipient countries under the “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure” and the “Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure.” Leaders underscored the importance of enhancing energy infrastructure interconnection including through considering an eco-friendly, economical and stable power supplying system in this region. Recognizing the potential and significance of infrastructure development and the promotion of public-private partnership, Leaders welcomed the participation from private sector in this regard.

### **A.2 Soft Connectivity**

9. Leaders acknowledged the importance of further enhancing efforts to suffice surging demand for soft connectivity hand in hand with regional economic advancement. In this regard, modernization of the customs is a top priority to further improve and facilitate cross-border security and customs clearance. Leaders reaffirmed the necessity to continue technical cooperation for capacity building programs for customs officers. Leaders noted that capacity building for FTA utilization by private companies is necessary to facilitate trade procedures. Information and communications technology (ICT) has taken on the essential role of enhancing the connectivity of Mekong countries. Leaders shared the intention to promote cooperation in the field of ICT, especially cooperation in telecommunication, cybersecurity and broadcasting. Leaders decided to

address challenges that digitalization has brought to people. Leaders reaffirmed the importance of improving institutional frameworks in Mekong countries so that these countries can participate in the new digital economy including E-commerce. Leaders shared the view on the importance of improving postal network and services to enhance connectivity in the Mekong region and with other regions. Leaders welcomed the efforts to promote cooperation between Mekong countries and Japan in the postal field, especially for the modernization of postal network and services.

### **A.3 Industry Connectivity**

10. Leaders reaffirmed their intention to promote the “Connected Industries” and to support participation of non-Mekong countries in the supply chain of the Mekong countries. To this end, Leaders decided to further promote the investment of both manufacturing/service industries in Mekong sub-region and business matching between Japanese and Mekong countries companies including SMEs and innovative Start-ups, and the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

## **B. People-Centered Society**

11. A people-centered approach makes economic development in the Mekong region more balanced and sustainable. This approach should include measures to transform the Mekong countries into a diverse and inclusive society with “no one left behind”, and aim at realizing “People-to-People connectivity” through people-to-people exchanges including sports and cultural exchanges, exchanges among youth, exchanges between local authorities, tourism exchanges, and cooperation in broadcasting programs. Two way tourism between Japan and the Mekong countries should be increased through development of sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, and quality tourism products and services and its benefits should be dispersed regional and countrywide outreaching vulnerable communities. In this regard, Leaders welcomed the convening of the “Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2019,” as a valuable occasion to promote mutual understanding and exchanges between peoples of Mekong countries and Japan.

### **B.1 Human Resource Development**

12. Leaders reaffirmed the significance of human resource development in the field of industry as well as business in light of the development of artificial intelligence (AI), digital related areas, and international business. In addition to industrial human resource development in which Japan has been actively engaged for the Mekong countries

including through the Industrial Human Resource Development Cooperation Initiative, Leaders welcomed the active efforts for technical cooperation between Financial Services Agency of Japan and its counterparts in the region through tailored trainings and fellowship programs like the Global Financial Partnership Center (GLOPAC). Leaders also stressed the importance of human resource development in the field of the agriculture and food industry including food value chain.

## **B.2 Healthcare**

13. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to accelerating progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and to achieving health for all people, whoever they are, wherever they live, by 2030. To this end, Leaders decided to put more focus on healthcare in the context of the Mekong-Japan Cooperation. In this regard, Leaders shared the intention to redouble the efforts for promoting UHC and all healthcare related industries including medical care, elderly care, prevention and society development which enables healthy living under the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN) in collaboration with ERIA.

## **B.3 Education**

14. Leaders shared recognition that education is a foundation to building a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable community. In this regard, they reaffirmed their intention to promote collaboration in the field of education through various initiatives including promotion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), higher education cooperation and sharing of expertise.

## **B.4 Legal and Judicial Cooperation**

15. Leaders highly valued the progress in the field of law and justice achieved through close cooperation between Mekong countries and Japan, and reaffirmed the intention to continue technical cooperation for legal and judicial reform and capacity building of criminal justice practitioners and legal professionals for the purpose of strengthening the rule of law. In addition, the Leaders renewed their determination to further strengthen maritime law enforcement in the region. The Leaders also welcomed Japan for hosting the fourteenth UN congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Kyoto in 2020.

## **C. Realization of a Green Mekong**

16. Realization of a Green Mekong, including countermeasures against climate change

and marine debris pollution, water resources management and disaster risk reduction, is a common goal for the Mekong countries and Japan. It is also an essential factor in realizing the SDGs. Realizing economic prosperity with a focus on protecting Mekong's beautiful and clean environment is our responsibility for future generations. In this regard, the Mekong countries appreciated Japan's continued support under "ASEAN-Japan Environmental Cooperation Initiative" including the development of quality environmental infrastructure addressing waste management, sustainable cities and wastewater treatment as well as marine pollution, marine litters, chemicals, biodiversity and climate change. Given the success of the Green Mekong Forum, where inter-sectored participants joined the discussion and exchanged their knowledge and views, Leaders welcomed the continued commitment and readiness of Japan and Thailand to co-host the Green Mekong Forum in the future, in order to follow up the Action Plan for "A Decade toward the Green Mekong," as updated. Leaders also encouraged greater participation of the Mekong region's young generations in the Green Mekong Forum to share their vision and perspective to realize the Green Mekong.

### **C.1 Disaster Risks Reduction and Climate Change**

17. Within the scope of the "Sendai Declaration" and "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030," Leaders will tackle the prevention and reduction of disaster risks, which could impede sustainable development in the Mekong region. Recognizing the current situation where climate change could pose a serious threat to international community including the Mekong region, and cause serious disasters, Leaders reaffirmed their efforts to strengthen the response capability and to work together to tackle climate change in this region, and reiterate our strong commitment to fully implementing the Paris Agreement. The inclusion of ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction can be effective and sustainable in reducing disaster risk and climate change mitigation and adaptation. In this context, Leaders decided to advance the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM).

### **C.2 Water resource management**

18. Leaders stressed the importance of sustainable use and management of water resources and pledged their commitment to further collaborating with regional and international organizations, in particular the Mekong River Commission to address the water related issues in the Mekong River Basin including trans-boundary water resources management. Leaders also stressed the necessity to coordinate with the LMI.

### **C.3 Circular Economy**

19. Recognizing that 3R (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle)-based approaches and environmentally sound waste management are important for assuring people's healthy life and solving urban problems and marine debris pollution, Leaders affirmed their intention to strengthen cooperation in this field.

### **C.4 Conservation and Sustainable Use of Aquatic Fishery Resources**

20. Leaders affirmed the importance of sustainable use of aquatic fishery resources, including cetaceans, based on scientific evidence.

## **III. Regional and Global Issues**

21. Leaders reaffirmed their strong determination to promote and deepen close cooperation on regional and global issues of common concern in order to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond. Leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to maintaining and promoting peace, security and stability in the region, as well as to the peaceful resolution of disputes, including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the universally recognized principles of international law.

22. The Leaders welcomed the ongoing diplomatic efforts, including the US-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Summit in June as well as the inter-Korean Summits this year, as a step towards the comprehensive resolution of the outstanding issues regarding the DPRK which would lead to the lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Leaders expressed their commitment to realizing the DPRK's complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missiles of all ranges in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). Leaders called on the DPRK to take concrete actions towards the aforementioned goal. Leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of the relevant UNSCRs. Leaders emphasized the importance of addressing humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

23. Leaders reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting a rules-based order, peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea and recognised the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of

peace, stability and prosperity. Leaders underscored the importance of the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety. Acknowledging the recent progress of the negotiation between ASEAN and China, Leaders emphasized the importance of the conclusion of an effective Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) on a mutually-agreed timeline. Leaders shared recognition that, in order to secure stability in the region, such diplomatic efforts should lead to non-militarization and a peaceful and open South China Sea.

24. Leaders took note of some concerns over the situation in the South China Sea including land reclamations and activities in the area, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and may undermine peace, security and stability in the region. Leaders reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation, and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS. Leaders emphasized the importance of non-militarization and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities, including those mentioned in the DOC that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea.