**Special Conference on Promoting Cooperation
in the Western Indian Ocean
August 30, 2019, Yokohama
Chair's Summary**

1. The Special Conference on Promoting Cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean was held on August 30, 2019 in Yokohama on the occasion of TICAD 7. Chaired by H.E. Mr. Kono Taro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, it was the first ministerial-level conference on the Western Indian Ocean hosted by Japan. Participants were from 10 Western Indian Ocean countries including H.E. Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and H.E. Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar, as special guests, as well as from 9 partner countries and organizations.

2. As key note speakers, Prime Minister Jugnauth and President Rajoelina stressed that the Western Indian Ocean region is endowed with promising marine and tourism resources, which should be further explored to fully develop Blue Economy in the region. They also emphasized the strategic significance of the Western Indian Ocean, where crucial international sea routes are concentrated, and the importance of the region's maritime safety and security. In this context, Prime Minister Jugnauth mentioned the need to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, and recalled that Mauritius hosted in conjunction with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) the Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security in the Western Indian Ocean as the most recent endeavor, leading to the establishment of a roadmap with 55 recommendations. The two leaders also stressed the need to tighten control over disorderly acts, such as piracy and transnational crimes, and paid tribute to the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS). This message was welcomed on the floor with reference to, inter alia, Djibouti Code of Conduct and the European Union Naval Force Somalia (Operation Atalanta). The conference further acknowledged that the premature release of pirates is condemnable and should be carefully monitored.

3. Echoing the keynote remarks, the participants shared the understanding that the development of Blue Economy requires a safe maritime environment.

In this context, they highlighted the existence of the two regional accords on maritime information sharing mechanism and coordinated operations in the western Indian Ocean region, which set up the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Center (RMIFC) in Madagascar and the Regional Center for Operations Coordination based in the Seychelles. They also pointed out the increasingly acute risks of climate change, natural disasters and marine pollution, which should be addressed in the regional and global contexts. They also stressed the need to enhance cooperation to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing to ensure sustainable use of marine resources.

4. The participants further welcomed steady expansion of international cooperation in the region, such as the IOC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The participants also shared best practices and experiences in addressing the above-mentioned challenges. The participants welcomed Japan's efforts to promote its vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), as the goal of the vision is in line with the efforts by the countries in the region as well as the regional frameworks.

5. As the chair, Minister Kono introduced Japan's efforts to address the challenges by focusing on four areas: (i) mitigating the vulnerabilities of island developing countries; (ii) promoting quality infrastructure investment in accordance with international standards such as openness, transparency, economic efficiency and debt sustainability; (iii) ensuring sustainable use of marine resources; and (iv) securing a free and open maritime order.

6. Finally, the participants shared the view that they will continue to promote cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean. The participants expressed their appreciation that this special conference was hosted by Japan and congratulated that both the conference and TICAD 7 were successfully completed.