

Joint Statement of the Ninth Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue

On 24 December 2022, the Ninth Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue (hereinafter referred to as "Dialogue") was held in Tokyo and Minister for Foreign Affairs HAYASHI Yoshimasa of Japan (Chairman), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mukhtar TILEUBERDI, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic Zheenbek KULUBAEV, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan Sirojiddin MUHRIDDIN, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid MEREDOV, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Vladimir NOROV (hereinafter referred to as "Ministers") participated in the meeting.

The Ministers reviewed the current mutual cooperation in various areas under the framework of the Dialogue, discussed prospects for further strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation relations, exchanged opinions on the regional and international issues, and expressed the following.

1. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the face-to-face meeting on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, and welcomed the ninth Foreign Ministers' Meeting as an important opportunity to confirm the positive development of relations between Japan and the Central Asian countries.

The Ministers confirmed their intention to further deepen the partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation based on friendship and mutual trust that have been established over the years.

2. The Ministers reviewed achievements of cooperation between Japan and the Central Asian countries over the past 30 years in areas such as economic infrastructure improvement, health and medical care, environment, border management, agriculture, and human resources development.

The Ministers, in order to achieve sustainable development in a free and open Central Asia, decided to establish and develop cooperation along new models, with emphasis on "investment in people" and "quality of growth" in economy, society, and human exchanges. The Ministers of the Central Asian countries welcomed the position of the Japanese side on conducting training courses, including educational grants by the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) and fostering expert.

The Ministers noted the relevance of climate and environmental threats and challenges to which the Central Asian region is extremely vulnerable. In order to achieve the goals of sustainable development and the implementation of the Paris Agreement in a free and open Central Asia, the Ministers concurred on strengthening practical cooperation on new development models, including in the direction of decarbonization and green growth.

The Ministers also expressed their interest in Central Asian human resources becoming further bridges between Japan and Central Asia through the Specified Skilled Worker System, the Technical Intern Training Program, and others.

The Ministers concurred on the importance for Central Asia of cooperation in the field of investments, trade, digital connectivity, healthcare, agriculture, education and research, water energy and climate change, as well as transportation and logistics seeking an access to the sea, noted interest in reviewing the result of the study on the “Trans-Caspian International Transport Route” conducted by the public-private study mission of Japan.

3. The Ministers concurred on the importance of enhancing efforts to respond to transnational organized crime, border control and cross-border cooperation, counter-narcotics capacity building, prevention of terrorism and extremism, capacity building support within the Central Asian region, and regional social-economic infrastructure improvement to help stabilize the entire region, including Afghanistan, in order to address the traditional risks of instability. The Ministers also exchanged views on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Afghanistan, including restoring socio-economic infrastructure and improving the human rights situation of the ethnic groups, minorities, women, and girls, especially the shared concerns on the Taliban’s recent decision to suspend girls’ higher education and continuation to bar girls from secondary school.

The Ministers support the development of secure, stable and peaceful Afghanistan, free from terrorism, war and drugs. The Ministers affirmed that it is essential to establish an inclusive government in Afghanistan that comprises representatives from all aspects of Afghan society.

4. The Ministers affirmed the importance of mutual cooperation as partners maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law anywhere in the world. The Ministers expressed continued commitment to upholding the UN Charter and other international law, particularly the principles of respect for the

independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, prohibition of the threat or use of force and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Ministers noted the importance of maintaining and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and concurred to continue to work together to this end. The Ministers positively noted the efforts of Central Asian countries to maximize the potential of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

The Ministers concurred on the importance of ensuring food, energy and logistics security against the backdrop of global supply chain instability and discussed to strengthen cooperation in this area. The Ministers also confirmed the importance of strengthening coordination and cooperation in addressing challenges in economic security, including economic coercion, and the importance of transparent and fair development finance.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the complete denuclearization of North Korea in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and stressed the importance of resolving humanitarian issues of concern to the international community, including the abductions issue.

5. The Ministers welcomed the progress in exchanges between Japan and the Central Asian countries, including inter-parliamentary, inter-regional, academic and cultural exchanges. The Ministers also decided to exchange views on the further development of the framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan" dialogue.

The Ministers noted the growing relevance and potential of inter-parliamentary exchanges as an effective instrument of global interaction in ensuring peace, security, and stability, and welcomed efforts to establish a forum for inter-parliamentary interaction between Central Asian states and Japan. In this context, the Ministers also welcomed the establishment of the Japan-Central Asian Countries Parliamentary Friendship League in Japan.

6. The Ministers welcomed the intention of the Republic of Kazakhstan to become the next Chair of the "Dialogue" and to host the tenth Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the framework of the "Dialogue".