

## **Keynote Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs IWAYA Takeshi for the “Symposium to Commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA)”**

**(December 17, 2024)**

### **Opening Remarks**

This year marks the 70th anniversary of Japan’s international cooperation. Today, I would like to consider the potentials of international cooperation in a new era, drawing on our experiences to date, together with everyone here.

### **Changes in the international situation**

In recent years, the international situation has changed dramatically. The international community is facing a compounded crisis, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the current situation in the Middle East, and global issues such as infectious diseases and climate change.

We must work together with the Global South, which has achieved rapid growth and become an important player in the international community, to overcome differences in values and interests and lead the international community away from “division and confrontation” and towards “dialogue and cooperation”.

### **Visit to Ukraine and Reconstruction Assistance**

Last month, on my first overseas trip since becoming Foreign Minister, I visited Ukraine and saw with my own eyes the vivid scars of the Russian invasion.

As winter sets in, it is essential to provide support in the energy sector to help the people of Ukraine get through the winter. We will continue to work with UNDP to provide power-related equipment.

In addition, restoration and reconstruction are also important for the future of Ukraine. JICA training invited government officials from Ukraine to Fukushima Prefecture to observe efforts to restore agriculture in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

At the Japan–Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction held in February this year, we were also able to show the way forward for reconstruction through the advanced technology and investment of Japanese private companies. We would like to continue to show the people of Ukraine hope for tomorrow.

### **Humanitarian assistance in light of the situation in the Middle East**

With regard to the situation in Gaza, it is necessary to secure a ceasefire as soon as possible, release hostages, and ensure human dignity.

Japan has been providing comprehensive humanitarian assistance to countries and regions in fragile situations with a view to development after reconstruction. Through such efforts to “the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus”, we will achieve peace–building and sustainable growth.

### **Global issues and disaster prevention as areas where “cooperation” should be promoted**

Next, I would like to talk about global issues. Japan has been working to achieve the SDGs, placing importance on the concept of “human security”.

We will continue to mobilize private sector knowledge and funding to the maximum extent possible and promote international cooperation in this field. We will also lead discussions on the formation of international rules with an eye to the post–SDGs era.

One such area is disaster prevention. As a major disaster prevention nation, Japan has led international disaster prevention discussions and cooperation, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

For example, through cooperation with the Philippines that began in the 1970s, we were able to reduce the damage caused by Typhoon Ulysses in 2020 by approximately 85% and the number of people affected by the typhoon by approximately 97%.

In addition, in the Maldives, the construction of seawalls that we have been supporting since the 1980s helped to protect the lives of many residents from the tsunami caused by the 2004 Sumatra earthquake.

Amid the growing severity of natural disasters, Japan will continue to lead the mainstreaming of disaster prevention in the international community.

### **International Cooperation and ODA in the New Era**

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of international cooperation, what are the possibilities for international cooperation in the new era?

At present, developing countries are facing social issues that are common to Japan, such as an increase in lifestyle diseases, traffic congestion due to rapid urbanization, and GX and DX.

In other words, solving global issues will actually benefit Japan itself. Rather than the traditional structure of the giver and the receiver, it is becoming increasingly important to pool our wisdom to solve common issues.

Based on this idea, we are promoting the “co-creation for common agenda initiative” in order to create solutions to common issues with partner countries. We are working with a variety of entities and using ODA as a catalyst to mobilize private-sector funds.

Another new possibility is the expansion of “triangular cooperation”. Cambodia, which Japan has supported in its efforts to deal with landmines, is now sharing its knowledge with other countries. One example of this is its efforts to deal with unexploded ordnance in Lao PDR.

The construction of “peace connectivity”, which is to say, the expansion of peace-related initiatives across a wide area, will bring about cooperation that transcends national borders and provide the foundation for the strong and sustainable growth of societies and regions.

### **Towards the Realization of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”**

The vision of a “Free and Open Indo–Pacific” (FOIP) is the basis for promoting this new international cooperation and leading the international community away from confrontation and towards cooperation.

FOIP aims to enhance connectivity in the Indo–Pacific region and create a prosperous region that is free from force and intimidation and where freedom and the rule of law are respected.

Japan has supported ASEAN’s efforts to strengthen connectivity in terms of both hardware and software, and has been promoting infrastructure development in the South West Asia region, including roads and ports.

Beyond South West Asia and the Indian Ocean lies Africa, a continent with a large proportion of young people and a great deal of energy. Maritime connectivity with Africa via the Indian Ocean, as well as the connectivity of the people, institutions and values that support it, will open up new horizons for growth in Japan and the world.

Next August, the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD9) will be held in Yokohama. When tackling the issues of Africa, the key is to mobilize the vitality of the private sector and promote human resource development for young people and women. And through co–creation between Japan and Africa, I would like to create innovative solutions to the common issues of the international community.

Africa is the largest destination for JICA’s Overseas Cooperation Volunteers. The Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, which will celebrate their 60th anniversary next year, have been connecting people with people through trust. I believe that these connections will be the driving force behind co–creation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, even in a changing international society, the importance of mutual understanding and trust remains unchanged.

In order to lead the international community away from “division and confrontation” and towards “dialogue and cooperation”, we will implement international cooperation for a new era with the help of everyone gathered here today.

Thank you for listening.

(State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma read on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.)