

**Joint Statement  
on the Establishment of the Strategic Partnership  
between Japan and the Republic of Bulgaria**

**Japan and the Republic of Bulgaria (hereinafter referred to collectively as “both Countries”)**,

**Affirming** the traditionally friendly bilateral relations based on amity and mutual respect spanning for over 115 years, the vibrant parliamentary, business, cultural, educational and people-to-people exchanges, being proud of their rich historical and cultural heritage, sharing fundamental values of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and open market economy, acting as like-minded partners with common positions on core regional and global issues,

**Acknowledging** the deepening and expanding of the bilateral cooperation with the Joint Statement on Partnership between Japan and the Republic of Bulgaria issued in 2004, and taking into account Bulgaria’s membership to NATO and to the European Union, as well as the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement, to serve as solid foundation for its further strengthening,

**Recognizing** the challenges posed by the complex global security environment, their common goals and readiness to work closely together to uphold the rules-based international order,

**Placing** greater emphasis on their firm adherence to the rule of law and the principles and norms enshrined in the United Nations Charter,

**Underscoring** that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are increasingly intertwined, and emphasizing the need to uphold and strengthen the free, open and inclusive international order based on the rule of law including a free and open Indo Pacific,

**Recognizing** both Countries’ endeavours to consolidate stability, security and prosperity both regionally and globally, through increased bilateral and international cooperation,

**Sharing** common recognition on the growing strategic importance of the bilateral partnership between Japan and Bulgaria to better respond to common challenges in a coordinated and comprehensive manner,

**Recognizing** Bulgaria's achievement of full membership in the Schengen area as of 1 January 2025, Bulgaria's steady progress in the OECD accession process, as well as its efforts towards Eurozone membership - all of which provide increased opportunities for expanding the bilateral cooperation,

**Building** upon the Memorandum on consultations and cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Bulgaria signed in 2019,

**Welcoming** the steady increase of high-level bilateral exchange in the recent years, including the first ever visit of the Prime Minister of Japan to Bulgaria in 2018,

**Noting** the fruitful framework of cooperation in strategic areas such as digital technologies, innovation, and energy,

**Acknowledging** the mutually beneficial intensified economic cooperation, wherein the Japanese business shows increasing interest in growing and competitive industries in Bulgaria such as IT, AI, R&D, while Bulgarian companies and start-ups, actively pursue business opportunities with Japan as a leading innovation base,

**Placing** importance on the bilateral cooperation in the framework of the Official Development Assistance in third countries, notably in the Western Balkans,

**Aspiring** to expand their cooperation in defence and security, while underscoring that the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership and the Japan-NATO Individually Tailored Partnership Programme provide additional basis for upgrading and expanding the existing coordination and collaboration,

**Resolve to elevate their bilateral relations to the level of a Strategic Partnership, focusing on four main pillars as follow:**

**Pillar I: Political and security dialogue**

1. Both Countries are determined to intensify their political cooperation, by holding regular high-level meetings and maintaining a constant intergovernmental dialogue, both bilaterally and in the multilateral fora. Cooperation between the national Parliaments and local authorities of both Countries, working level collaboration among ministries and government agencies, as well as civil society dialogue will be equally encouraged.
2. Both Countries reiterate their firm opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion, anywhere in the world.

3. Both Countries condemn Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and reaffirm their support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, underscoring the importance of the international community's unity in responding to Russia's aggression. Both Countries condemn Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and threats to use nuclear force as a serious and unacceptable menace to the peace and security of the international community. Both Countries condemn the increasing military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, including North Korea's export and Russia's procurement of North Korea's ballistic missiles in breach of multiple UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs), and Russia's use of these missiles and munitions against Ukraine, as well as the engagement in combat against Ukraine of North Korean troops deployed to Russia. Such cooperation negatively impacts security both in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe. Both Countries urge the international community to uphold international law by opposing dangerous expansion of the conflict and implementing all relevant United Nations Resolutions. Both Countries welcomed ongoing efforts to achieve a ceasefire and applauded Ukraine's commitment to an immediate ceasefire, which is an essential step towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the UN Charter and international law. Both Countries consider the prevention of further losses of thousands of human lives, as well as of the continued devastation of Ukraine's economy and infrastructure as a priority task of immense importance. Both Countries highly value their respective support extended to Ukraine to this day. Japan appreciates Bulgaria's consistent support to Ukraine, as well as Bulgaria's efforts in accepting Ukrainian refugees, while Bulgaria appreciates Japan's bilateral contribution as well as initiative and leadership in G7 in support of Ukraine.
4. Both Countries, as maritime countries, reaffirm the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with international law as reflected in, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Recognizing the benefits of having the oceans and seas peaceful and prosperous, both Countries emphasize the importance of the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the universally recognized principles of international law, as reflected in the UNCLOS, and strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status

quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, which increase tensions and undermine regional stability and the international order based on the rule of law.

5. Both Countries share a common interest in a free, democratic, stable, secure and prosperous Black Sea region. To this end both Countries will cooperate to promote economic development, regional security, freedom of navigation and democracy in the region.
6. Both Countries are deeply concerned by the destructive cycle of violence across the Middle East, which threatens regional stability and shatters the lives of civilians. They reaffirm their unequivocal condemnation of the terror attacks carried out by Hamas and others against Israel on October 7, 2023 and stand with the families of the victims. Both Countries reiterate their support for the full implementation of the ceasefire reached between Israel and Hamas, including for the release of all hostages and the expansion of humanitarian aid in Gaza. In this regard, both Countries reaffirm their unwavering commitment to all international efforts for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based on a two-State solution consistent with international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions.
7. Both Countries strongly condemn North Korea's ongoing development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, including the multiple Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) launches, in violation of relevant UNSCRs. Both Countries reiterate their commitment to the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of all North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), ballistic missiles of all ranges and related programs and emphasize the importance of full implementation of the relevant UNSCRs. Both Countries underscore the need to deter and counter North Korea's malicious cyber activities including cryptocurrency thefts, which fund its unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs. Both Countries strongly urge North Korea to immediately resolve the abductions issue.
8. Building on the commonalities between the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and Japan's vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), both Countries concur on enhancing coordination to deliver on an active partnership agenda for security and prosperity, and continued engagement with ASEAN, South Asia and the Pacific Islands countries. Both Countries commit to working in support of Japan-EU cooperation and of Japan-NATO cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

9. Both Countries will work toward expanding cooperation in the field of national security and defence both bilaterally and in multilateral fora through closer communication between their Ministries of Defence. In this context, Bulgaria welcomes the participation of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force in the Sea Breeze 2024 – a joint mine countermeasure exercise, organized by the US and Ukraine and hosted by Bulgaria. The two leaders express their hopes for furthering concrete cooperation in this field.
10. Both Countries also reaffirm the importance of cooperation in the field of cyber-security both bilaterally and between Japan and NATO.
11. Both Countries recognize the instrumental role of development cooperation for eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable development, economic growth, prosperity and democracy. Bulgaria highly values the Official Development Assistance which was provided by Japan in the transition years. Today Japan and Bulgaria partner as like-minded providers of development assistance and express readiness to explore new avenues to further expand their cooperation.
12. Both Countries share the view that the prosperity and development of the Western Balkans is indispensable for the prosperity and security of Europe. Both Countries welcome and support the progress by the Western Balkan countries in the EU accession process. Bulgaria underlines the importance of the progress, based on the principle of own merits. To this end both Countries reaffirm the importance of their close cooperation in providing assistance to the Western Balkans, including in disaster preparedness and response, and SMEs management. Both Countries appreciate the regular holding of the Japan-Bulgaria-Western Balkans workshops on disaster management co-organized by the Governments of Japan and Bulgaria since 2019 and their result-oriented nature. Both Countries expressed readiness to explore ways to further expand their existing cooperation in the Western Balkans based on but not limited to the “Western Balkan Cooperation Initiative” promoted by Japan.
13. In addition, both Countries express their willingness to study opportunities to cooperate in disaster preparedness and response within the Japan-NATO framework, including through the NATO Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence in Sofia.
14. Both Countries concur on the importance of an urgent reform of the UN Security Council including the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories of its membership, and decided to enhance cooperation

to this end, including in the negotiation process of the UN. In this context, both Countries continue to cooperate closely with each other at the United Nations.

## **Pillar II: Economy, Business, Research and Development, Innovation**

15. Both Countries reaffirm their determination to expand and diversify the scope of their bilateral economic and trade relations by taking full advantage of the Japan-EU cooperation framework, in particular the Economic Partnership Agreement, and by taking necessary bilateral measures to boost trade and facilitate investments from either country to the other, including through providing adequate support to the already existing business entities in their respective countries.
16. Both Countries share their determination to pursue an open, a rules-based, inclusive, free and fair global economy. Both Countries recognize that transparency, diversification, security, sustainability, trustworthiness and reliability are essential principles on which to build and strengthen resilient supply-chain networks with trusted partners who honour international norms and obligations and are committed to free and mutually beneficial economic and trade relationships.
17. Both Countries firmly support maintaining and strengthening the free and fair rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core, and concur on working together on WTO reform to improve all its functions. They commend the efforts to intensify discussions in the WTO on contemporary trade-related issues, such as trade and industrial policy. Both Countries acknowledge the positive role of plurilateral negotiations at the WTO as a means to advance issues of interest.
18. Both Countries concur on the need for further deepening dialogues to enhance coordination and cooperation on economic resilience and economic security. Both Countries express concerns over strategies to use a wide and evolving range of non-market policies and practices as well as excess capacities resulting from them, that distort the global level-playing field. Both Countries also express concerns with and oppose economic coercion through the use of, or the threat of use of, economic measures, which are intended to pressure, induce or influence the foreign government's exercise of its legitimate rights or choices.

19. Both Countries resolve to uphold the principles of sustainable connectivity and quality infrastructure in bilateral projects in line with the contents of the Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure between Japan and the European Union. Both Countries also recognize the importance of attracting the Japanese private sector's interest toward the Three Seas Initiative. Bulgaria commends the participation of Japan in the Three Seas Initiative in the capacity of strategic partner. Both Countries acknowledge the potential for the development of major infrastructure projects and for strengthening bilateral cooperation in various other fields such as energy and environment.
20. Both Countries recognize the increasing business-to-business relations and their direct reciprocal contribution to the overall advancement of the relations, including in the fields of culture, education and science.
21. Both Countries express determination to further encourage and support business activities in Japan and Bulgaria by intensifying the dialogue between the corresponding Japanese and Bulgarian ministries and institutions, including JETRO as an active facilitator of the business exchange between the two countries.
22. Both Countries show their strong readiness to launch concrete action to cooperate in the areas of digitalization, ICT and innovation, and intensification of business dialogue in the respective fields in the framework of the Japan-Bulgaria Joint Statement on Economic Cooperation on Digital and Innovation signed in 2023, as well as of the Japan-EU Digital Partnership. Japan welcomes the intention of Bulgaria to become the innovation hub of the region.
23. Both Countries decide to further promote the industrial, technological and scientific cooperation, acknowledging with satisfaction the fruitful collaborations between RIKEN and INSAIT (Institute for Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence and Technology) and between Tsukuba University and GATE (Big Data for Smart Society Institute) among others.
24. Both countries encourage research & development & innovation collaboration with a view to facilitating joint projects proceeding from their scientific and technological capacities. The Bulgarian research universities and the newly established centers of excellence and centers of competence in the fields of mechatronics, microelectronics, clean technologies, information and communication technologies, biotechnologies, healthy life industries, and

creative and recreational industries will cooperate with relevant Japanese counterparts to leverage the level and market orientation of research activities and to improve the potential for applied research, experimental development, and innovation implementation.

25. Both Countries commit to use to the benefit of their partnership the advantageous geographical position of Bulgaria connecting Europe with Asia. To this end both Countries will cooperate to promote economic development, regional security and democracy in the region while exploring win-win opportunities in the areas of connectivity, energy, trade, digitalization, and tourism.
26. Both Countries recognize the strategic importance of energy and energy transition, and resolve to further promote bilateral cooperation in environment protection and clean energy, including the cooperation with regard to the Chaira Pumped Storage Hydro Power Plant, based on the Memorandum of Cooperation on Energy Transition between the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria, signed in 2024.
27. Both Countries concur on further promoting bilateral cooperation in tourism where there is an untapped potential, based on the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Japan Tourism Agency and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria, signed in 2024.
28. Both Countries decide to further promote and facilitate the mutual understanding and exchanges between their business entities utilizing the occasion of the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan and GREEN×EXPO 2027, which are valuable opportunities to enhance the visibility of Bulgaria in Japan, as well as the friendship between two countries.

### **Pillar III: Culture, Education and People-to-People Exchanges**

29. Both Countries mutually confirm the importance of cultural exchange and people-to-people interactions as a basis for development of their close relations based on mutual understanding and trust.
30. Both Countries acknowledge with satisfaction the active cultural exchanges between them, among others “the Days of Japanese Culture” in Bulgaria, which have been attracting tens of thousands of visitors every year since 1991,

as well as the annual Bulgarian festivals in different Japanese cities. Both Countries express their willingness to further promote cultural exchanges with the aim of enhancing mutual friendship.

31. Both Countries cooperate to increase the number of their students studying in the other country, while being mindful of the potential of youths to bring about positive effect to bilateral relations at later stages of their lives and as a force to promote and deepen mutual understanding.
32. Both Countries underscore the significant role of teaching Japanese and Bulgarian languages at schools and universities in the respective country and acknowledge the importance of the annual language competitions in Japanese and Bulgarian languages, held in Bulgaria and Japan respectively, for creating a solid foundation for strengthening the bilateral relations.
33. Both Countries express their willingness to continue and deepen close cooperation in the field of cultural heritage protection including through sharing expertise, exchange of experts and bilateral coordination in relevant international fora such as UNESCO. Japan expresses its gratitude for the invaluable support extended by Bulgaria for the inscription of the “Sado Island Gold Mines” on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
34. Both Countries welcome active exchanges with public and private sector participation between sister and friendship cities. In this context, both Countries support the on-going relevant frameworks cherished by local municipalities such as the partnerships between Okayama and Plovdiv, Hodogaya (Yokohama) and Sofia, Munakata (Fukuoka) and Kazanlak, Sakuragawa (Ibaraki) and Silistra, Toyoake (Aichi) and Gabrovo as well as the initiatives for enhancing people-to-people exchanges between Fukuyama (Hiroshima) and Kazanlak and Murayama (Yamagata) and Karlovo, and affirm further promotion of these exchanges.
35. Both Countries will further promote media exchanges, considering their significant effect on the mutual understanding between their citizens.
36. Both Countries recognize the importance of cooperation in sports as a powerful tool to create friendships and mutual understanding, noting the mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of rhythmic gymnastics, as well as the increased interest in Bulgaria in Japanese traditional martial arts and sports, and concur to further deepen collaborations in sports based on the bilateral Memorandum of Cooperation in the field of Sports, signed in 2016.

#### **Pillar IV: Global issues**

37. Both Countries underline the importance of promoting sustainable development and recall their commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They welcome the ongoing efforts to cooperate with each other in the preparation of their respective Voluntary National Reviews of SDGs to be presented at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July.
38. Both Countries encourage advancement of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, highlighting the leading role women play in the prevention of violent conflicts, the provision of relief and recovery, and forging ahead with lasting peace.
39. Both Countries reaffirm their commitment to accelerating international disaster risk reduction cooperation in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. They emphasize the critical role of a disaster preparedness approach and the need for investment in people, goods and infrastructure for disaster risk reduction as well as to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
40. Both Countries recognize that climate change requires urgent and coordinated global action and reiterate their commitment to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and to reaching net-zero GHG emissions by 2050.
41. Both Countries reaffirm their commitment to realizing a world without nuclear weapons. They reaffirm 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 architecture and are jointly determined to continue to work together in this area. Furthermore they affirm the importance of ensuring nuclear safety, security, and safeguards (3S) in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and reiterate their firm support for the relevant efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
42. Both Countries reaffirm Japan’s safe, transparent, and science-based process to responsibly manage the discharge of Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) treated water in proactively coordinating with scientists and partners as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

43. Both Countries reaffirm the importance of cooperation in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, international organized crime, drug trafficking and trafficking in persons. They confirm that terrorism can never be justified for whatever reason and emphasize the particular importance of the concerted efforts of the international community to combat terrorism.

Signed in duplicate in two, on the day of 20 May 2025, in the English language.

ISHIBA Shigeru  
Prime Minister of Japan

Rumen Radev  
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