

**Statement by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,
Mr. Kazuyuki Hamada**

Longstanding suffering of 21 months in Syria is not only an issue concerning one country or a region, but is an extremely urgent and serious issue to the whole world. Even at this moment, bloodshed continues and innocent people are freezing under cold sky. Facing such a severe condition, the international community must act as one and tackle the issue as quickly as possible. In this regard, we as the Group of Friends of the Syrian People, have closely coordinated with each other and had serious discussions from various points of view on the matter.

Japan, as part of unified efforts of the Friends Group, hosted the Fifth Meeting of Working Group on Sanctions in Tokyo on November 30. It was held for the first time in Asia, with record-high participation of 67 countries and organizations, including new countries from Asia, and succeeded in sending strong message to the Syrian regime and showed solidarity to the people of Syria.

The Syrian regime cannot achieve people's aspirations, and has lost legitimacy to govern the country. Stopping the violence is the pre-condition to achieve a Syrian-led political transition. While the responsibility for the violence lies with the Syrian regime, we condemn all acts of violence including terrorism. Such violence could be charged with a violation of international human rights and humanitarian law, and must be stopped immediately. Japan strongly reiterates that the impunity must not be accepted and the situation in Syria should be referred to International Criminal Court by the United Nations Security Council. In addition, as has been already stated by other representatives, we are gravely concerned about a possibility of use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. Japan strongly urges the regime not to use any non-conventional weapons including chemical ones under any circumstances and to accede to relevant international agreements including the Chemical Weapons Convention in an earliest possible manner.

**4TH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE GROUP
OF FRIENDS OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE
Marrakech, 12 December 2012**

The international community should provide assistance to the extent possible so that Syrian people are not to be divided by their religion or ethnicity, and realize their legitimate aspiration to build a peaceful, democratic and pluralistic society. In that regard, we highly commend the formation of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces and their tireless efforts thus far. Japan fully supports the Coalition's effort to become an inclusive body and encourage them to prepare for a prompt and peaceful transition.

Japan will continue to closely work with all Friends of Syria to extend humanitarian assistance and a nation - building support for new Syria. Japan sincerely hopes that all Syrian people could live in safe and regain their stable life in new Syria, where their aspiration achieved, and that this meeting will be the last to be held in such a devastated situation.

Japan promises that, in cooperation with the concerned international community, we will continue to be an integral part of achieving such a goal.