

Statement by H.E. Seiji Kihara
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the 70th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific
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(INTRODUCTION)

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished representatives of the Member States,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, on behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I express my heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the Government and people of China for the tragic loss of lives and devastation caused by the huge earthquake in Yunnan Province. I pray that the affected region will recover as soon as possible.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Japan's membership of ESCAP. For the last 60 years, Japan and ESCAP have enjoyed close partnership to address regional challenges. Going forward, Japan will continue our active cooperation with ESCAP.

Also, I would like to congratulate the inauguration of Dr. Shamshad Akhtar as Executive Secretary of UN ESCAP and the successful holding of the 70th session of ESCAP.

(JAPAN'S SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC)

Improving regional connectivity in the Asia-Pacific, which is the theme of this session, is an area upon which Japan has long put emphasis, as it will benefit the whole region including least developed, landlocked and small island developing economies. Achieving regional connectivity requires promoting **THREE** connectivities, namely, (i) physical connectivity, such as development of infrastructure and ICT networks, (ii) institutional connectivity, including

improvement of legal systems, and (iii) people-to-people connectivity. Japan, with a view to bringing about more connected and prosperous Asia-Pacific, has long provided assistance to each country in the region in all three areas.

For instance, as ASEAN accelerates its efforts to establish the ASEAN Community in 2015, Japan will offer its cooperation through steadily implementing 70 flagship projects to strengthen ASEAN connectivity. Such cooperation ranges from the construction of Lach Huyen International Port in Viet Nam, improvement of national roads in Laos and Cambodia, to development of human resources, improvement of the legal systems, and modernization of the customs in Viet Nam and Myanmar. Also, Japan-Mekong cooperation including on the East-West Economic Corridor and the Southern Economic Corridor is another showcase of our cooperation. In addition, I personally attended the Post-Forum Dialogue of the Pacific Island Forum last week and expressed Japan's continued support for sub-regional connectivity and integration.

At the same time, in order for regional connectivity to materialize in full scale, the seas from the Pacific to the Indian oceans should be kept thoroughly open, free and peaceful. Thus, respecting the rule of law is of critical importance in ensuring peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific.

(DISASTER RISK REDUCTION)

Then, I would like to briefly touch upon the close relationship between the regional connectivity and disaster risk reduction. As the tragic earthquake in China reminded us, the Asia-Pacific region is prone to disasters, as 50% of the world disasters in the past 30 years are said to have occurred in this region, in terms of human and economic losses. Thailand floods in 2011 made us keenly aware that the impact of natural disasters could reach anywhere in the world immediately through disruption of the global supply chain. Thus, it is essential to introduce the perspective of disaster risk reduction in the

development planning and policies toward building resilient social foundation and further regional connectivity.

In March next year, we will host the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai and a successor framework for the Hyogo Framework for Action will be adopted at the Conference. We look forward to the highest-level participation from your countries and to your cooperation for the success of the Conference.

(CONCLUSION)

Mr. Chair,

As distinguished speakers have repeatedly mentioned, next year is the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals. The Asia-Pacific region has achieved many of the MDG targets, but much remains to be done. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals just finished its work and the intergovernmental process for the post-2015 development agenda will start in the next session of the UN General Assembly. We need to exert all our efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth, leaving no one out, but rather, empowering everyone. Asia-Pacific region has much to offer and roles to play in these efforts. Let us join our hands to achieve shared prosperity.

I thank you for your kind attention.