

**Statement by Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign
Affairs of Japan
On the occasion of the 18th SAARC Summit
Kathmandu, Nepal, November 26, 2014**

The Rt. Honorable Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and Chair of SAARC,
Distinguished Representatives of SAARC Member States, Observer States and Organization, as well as the Secretariat,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the holding of the 18th SAARC Summit hosted by the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and commend excellent chairmanship of Nepal. I would also like to pay our utmost respect for the endeavors of the SAARC Secretariat toward promoting regional cooperation. May I also take this opportunity to extend our deepest sympathies to the victims of the floods in northern India and northeastern Pakistan in early September and the victims of the snowstorm and avalanches in the Himalayas in October.

Mr. Chairperson,

Japan attaches its importance to strengthening cooperation with SAARC as a whole as well as its member states, and has designated Ambassador of Japan to Nepal as Permanent Representative of Japan to SAARC. The theme of this Summit, 'Deeper Integration for Peace and Prosperity,' matches Japan's intention to promote cooperation with each SAARC member state in areas such as energy, people-to-people exchange, democratization and peace-building, and thus to contribute to enhancing integration and connectivity within SAARC.

With regard to energy, stable supply of electricity is a common challenge for all SAARC member states. Japan has held “Japan-SAARC Symposium” on energy seven times since 2006. In the 8th symposium, which is planned next March, we are expecting to adopt a proposal that sums up the discussions held at the previous symposia, and we intend to share it with high-levels of each SAARC member state. Japan will also conduct a study to examine possible ways of cooperation to further strengthen connectivity among SAARC countries in the fields of energy and power based on previous discussions. Taking also into account the proposal to be adopted at the symposium next year, we would like to formulate specific projects.

Japan has also been active in promoting youth exchange between Japan and SAARC since 2007 and is currently undertaking a youth exchange program under the scheme of JENESYS2.0. We have so far invited approximately 2,500 young people from the SAARC member states and additional 64 people are expected to visit Japan in December. It is my hope to continue to encourage youth exchange with the SAARC countries in order to solidify the ground for trust building among the young people who will shape the future of the SAARC region and Japan.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are convinced that the firm establishment of democracy and realization of peaceful society in each country serve as the most important foundation for the development and prosperity of the SAARC region and for the realization of deeper integration within SAARC. Japan will continue to extend its cooperation in enhancing peace-building, national reconciliation, democratization and governance in the SAARC region as part of its efforts under the policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” based on the principle of international cooperation.

Regarding cooperation in disaster risk reduction, the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in Sendai next March. It is expected to adopt the succeeding framework of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, which was adopted in 2005 and has been the international guideline for disaster risk reduction. This conference is therefore particularly important in further promoting cooperation in the field of disaster risk reduction between Japan and the SAARC countries, all of which are disaster-prone and have suffered from a number of natural disasters. We hope to have the highest-level participation from each SAARC member state. The host city of Sendai was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. I would like you to participate in the conference and see our reconstruction efforts there, hoping to share our experiences and lessons learnt from the disaster.

Mr. Chairperson,

Improved connectivity through deeper integration within SAARC and promoting partnership in various fields between the SAARC states and other countries are crucial for South Asia to achieve growth and development apt for its potential. In this regard, the theme of this Summit “Deeper integration for peace and prosperity” is the goal that SAARC should reach for.

In closing, Japan would like to contribute to strengthening integration and connectivity among the SAARC countries by developing new areas of cooperation toward deeper integration, on top of the cooperation extended so far. I hope that this Summit will give impetus to further enhance the relationship among the SAARC member states as well as between them and relevant countries.

Thank you for your kind attention.