

Joint Press Statement
6th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of
the Visegrad Group plus Japan
Luxemburg, 5 November, 2015

On 5 November, 2015 in Luxemburg, Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and Japan met for the sixth time in this format. The Ministers reaffirmed that the partnership between V4 and Japan is based on shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Ministers also reaffirmed the close partnership between Japan and the EU based on common values and shared principles. The Ministers discussed, taking into account of the development of the international and regional situation and progress of their cooperation since the last Meeting in Delhi-NCR in November 2013, the Ministers discussed the following topics:

I. Global Challenges

Migration Issues/ Middle East

The Ministers shared the view that addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement leading to increased number of asylum seekers and their attempts to reach European Unions is the key element to tackle the migration flows to Europe. In this context, the Ministers emphasized that all parties concerned should strengthen their diplomatic activities and negotiating effort aiming at peaceful and lasting solutions and subsequent stabilization in Northern Africa and the Middle East. Japan appreciated V4's readiness to further provide assistance to the countries of transit and origin, and, in general, all EU's humanitarian assistance, including a shelter provided to the Middle East refugees and migrants so far. The Ministers of V4 appreciated the solidarity expressed by Japan and welcomed Japan's support for Syria's neighbouring countries as well as non-EU member states such as the Republic of Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Ukraine

The Ministers recalled on all sides to fully implement the Minsk agreements and reiterated that the resolution of the conflict in Ukraine can only be achieved through a peaceful settlement which will fully respect territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. The Ministers reiterated

non recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. The Ministers shared the view that changing borders by force violated fundamental principles of international law and should be a concern for all nations. The Ministers commended the commitment of the Ukrainian government to extensive and sustainable reforms and expressed their readiness to continue supporting Ukraine in these endeavors. The Ministers of V4 appreciated the contribution of Japan to encourage efforts by Ukraine towards reforms. Japan welcomed the V4's concrete support to Ukraine such as transitional assistance and sectoral knowledge sharing.

Efforts for Peace and Security of the International Community

Mindful of the uncertainties in the regional security environment, the Ministers continue to observe the situation in the East and South China Sea and are concerned by any unilateral actions that change the status quo and increase tensions. The Ministers underline the need for all parties to seek peaceful, and cooperative solutions to maritime claims, including through internationally recognized legal dispute settlement mechanisms, and to maintain full freedom of navigation and overflight of the high seas under international law as enshrined in the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. The safety of navigation is essential for peaceful and sustainable development. The Ministers urge all parties to refrain from unilateral actions, including the threat or use of force and coercion. The Ministers support the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the rapid conclusion of the negotiations to establish an effective Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. The Ministers highlight the constructive role of practical confidence-building measures, such as the establishment of direct links of communication in cases of crisis and crisis management mechanisms in this regard.

Concerning North Korea, the Ministers reiterated their grave concern over North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs, including its uranium enrichment program. Both sides strongly urged North Korea to refrain from any provocation, to fully comply with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, and to take concrete actions towards denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Ministers also strongly urged North Korea to address without delay the human rights concerns of the international community, including the abductions issues.

The Ministers reconfirmed the close linkage of security environments in East Asia and Europe taking into account of the development of international and regional situation since the last Meeting. They shared the view that no unilateral attempts to change the status quo may be tolerated.

In this context, Japan underlined its determination to contribute even more actively to securing peace, stability and prosperity of the region and the world from the policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace”, based on the principle of international cooperation. The V4 highly appreciated Japan’s efforts and its contribution to global peace, stability and prosperity, and expressed its support for Japan’s growing readiness to increase its contribution in global and regional security.

Japan expressed its willingness to contribute continuously to the “GLOBSEC” Forum as a useful opportunity for further deepening the mutual understanding of the security situation in Europe and East Asia.

Cooperation in the UN

The V4 and Japan reaffirmed the importance of the UN reform, with particular emphasis on the Security Council. Both sides reemphasized the necessity to improve its effectiveness, transparency and representativeness in order to reflect the reality of today's international community. In this respect, both sides reiterated their will to work together to achieve concrete outcomes during this 70th session of the UN General Assembly, including the increase in the number of the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. The parties welcomed and reaffirmed their support for the “Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes” as elaborated by Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group.

The Ministers of V4 expressed their will to cooperate with Japan during its term as a non-permanent member of the Council.

Climate change

The Ministers confirmed their resolve to achieve a new, fair and effective legally binding international agreement applicable to all Parties of the UNFCCC at forthcoming COP21 in Paris.

Women Empowerment

The Ministers praised activities related to respective women empowerment policies as an opportunity to enhance V4-Japan exchanges.

II. Japan – EU relations

The V4 and Japan confirmed the importance of the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) as a legally binding foundation for the coming decades and expressed their determination that the agreement should appropriately reflect the EU-Japan relations as like-minded global partners sharing fundamental values and principles.

The Ministers reaffirmed that the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) / Free Trade Agreement (FTA), negotiated in parallel with the SPA, should substantially improve access to markets for Japanese and V4's companies in a balanced manner and thus strengthen economic relations between both sides.

The V4 and Japan committed themselves to working towards that goal and striving to the earliest possible conclusion of both SPA and EPA, especially with a view to reaching agreement in principle on the EPA during this year.

III. Japan – NATO relations

The V4 and Japan reiterated common will to enhance cooperation being developed within NATO partnership policy to promote global peace and stability.

The Ministers reaffirmed commitment to strengthen political dialogue on the issues of common concern, and practical cooperation in a wide range of areas including: peace support, interoperability, maritime security, non-proliferation, cyber defense, hybrid warfare, crisis-management, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

IV. Major Outcome and Perspective of the V4 plus Japan Cooperation

Official Development Assistance (ODA) cooperation

The Ministers welcomed participation of experts from V4 side to the first

joint V4 plus Japan workshop, held in October 2014, of “the Project on Establishment and Promotion of Mentoring Service for Small and Medium Enterprises in Western Balkans”, being implemented by Japan. They reaffirmed their willingness to continue cooperation in countries of the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans.

Science, Technology and Innovation

The Ministers shared the view that the field of science and technology is a particularly promising cooperation area in the V4+Japan framework. All sides praised the results of joint workshops and seminar held in this field. They also welcomed with satisfaction that the five V4+Japan joint research projects had been adopted under the Memorandum of Cooperation on Scientific and Technological Cooperation. The Ministers expressed their expectation that further positive developments in the field of science, technology and innovation would bring added value to bilateral, V4+Japan and EU-Japan cooperation.

Regular Joint Seminar

Following the successful results from previous joint seminars and workshops, the Ministers decided to hold next one in Tokyo during the Czech Presidency on a theme which both sides share interest.

Policy Dialogue

The Ministers shared the view that V4+Japan policy dialogue is a useful framework to exchange views and information in the field of foreign policy, especially on security issues. They agreed that the next 8th meeting should be held during 2016 with the participation of high level foreign policy officials on all sides.

People-to-people exchanges

The Ministers appreciated the V4 plus Japan Exchange Year in 2014 which was successful in further enhancing friendly relationships between V4 countries and Japan. They expressed their will to promote people-to-people exchanges towards the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

V. Conclusion

The Ministers reiterated their willingness to continue to meet in this format on a biennial basis for the further strengthening of the V4 plus Japan relationship. Their next meeting should be held in 2017.