

As delivered

Statement by State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

H.E. Mr. Kentaro SONOURA,

Supporting the future of Syria and the region

Brussels Conference, 5 April 2017

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the European Union, the United Nations, and the Governments of Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar and the United Kingdom for hosting this Conference.

Japan is deeply concerned by the reports that chemical weapons were allegedly used in Syria on April 4. I express my deepest condolences to all the victims and their bereaved families. We strongly condemn this act if the use of chemical weapon is confirmed. Japan expects related countries and organizations to promptly find out what occurred. The use of chemical weapons is not permissible under any circumstances.

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Six years have passed since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in March, 2011. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have lost their lives and more than 13 million Syrian people remain in severe need of humanitarian assistance.

I visited personally Baharka refugee camp on the outskirts of Erbil, Iraq in March, 2015. There I witnessed not only the refugees' ill-fated suffering but also their aspirations for the future.

Through my visit to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, I also renewed my understanding of the huge social and economic burden on the neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees.

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Japan immediately and fully disbursed 350 million US dollars for humanitarian assistance, pledged at the Conference on the Syria Crisis in London last year. Since 2011, Japan's assistance to Syria, Iraq and neighboring countries has thus far reached approximately 1.9 billion US dollars.

With regard to our new humanitarian assistance of approximately 260 million US dollars to Syria and neighboring countries, decided after the beginning of 2017, Japan intends to promptly implement this assistance. Taking into consideration the mid-to-long term stability of Syria, Japan emphasizes the importance of assistance inside Syria.

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We intend to implement our assistance programs, worth 77million US dollars, in the areas of human development for youth and women's empowerment, assistance to the displaced and rehabilitation of the electricity supply to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs on the ground.

With regard to our multi-year assistance to neighboring countries, the Government of Japan announced last year its readiness to provide support amounting to approximately 1 billion US dollars through the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) of the World Bank over 5 years until 2020.

On March 28, we decided to extend Emergency Grant Aid of 15 million US dollars through this Facility to provide emergency health and medical care assistance for Syrian refugees in Jordan and their host communities. I do hope that other donors will join our efforts.

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Let me stress our strong hope that our assistance will contribute to stability and peace in Syria. The nationwide ceasefire along with safe, sustainable and unhindered humanitarian access for the people in need is inextricably linked to substantial progress in the political process.

Ladies and gentlemen, Japan, as a member of UN Security Council and of International Syria Support Group, remains committed to playing a responsible role for this unprecedented humanitarian crisis in both humanitarian and political spheres.

Thank you very much.