

Chair's Statement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting  
(6<sup>th</sup> August 2017)

1. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Manila, the Republic of the Philippines, on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2017, back to back with the 50<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. The Meeting was chaired by **H.E. Mr. Taro Kono**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and participated by **H.E. Mr. Prak Sokhonn**, Senior Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, **H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, **H.E. Mr. U Kyaw Tin**, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, **H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and **H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

2. The Ministers, celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, reviewed the Mekong-Japan cooperation based upon the "New Tokyo Strategy 2015" adopted at the 7<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Summit held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and the "Mekong-Japan Action Plan for Realization of the New Tokyo Strategy 2015" adopted at the 8<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015, and reaffirmed their determination to further strengthen the cooperation.

3. The Ministers expressed their congratulations on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN and reaffirmed the importance of the ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership and the Mekong-Japan cooperation towards narrowing development gap and strengthening regional integration and connectivity, including through their continued support for the effective implementation of the "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure", the Work Plan III of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025.

4. The Ministers also exchanged their views on regional and global issues of common concern and stressed the need to continue close collaboration in the relevant regional and international fora including the East Asia Summit to achieve regional peace, stability and prosperity.

5. The Ministers warmly welcomed the improving cooperation between ASEAN and China with respect to the South China Sea. The Ministers were encouraged by the conclusion and adoption of the framework of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, which will facilitate the work for the conclusion of an effective COC on a mutually-agreed timeline. The Ministers underscored the importance of the full and

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effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety.

6. The Ministers took note of the successful testing of the MFA-to-MFA hotline to manage maritime emergencies in the South China Sea. The Ministers looked forward to the operationalization of the joint statement on the observance of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) in the South China Sea as part of practical measures that could reduce tensions, and the risks of accidents, misunderstandings and calculation.

7. The Ministers took note of some concerns expressed by some Ministers on activities in the area that have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and may undermine peace, security and stability in the region. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and over-flight above the South China Sea.

8. The Ministers recognized the benefits that would be gained from having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and prosperity.

9. The Ministers affirmed that peace and security in the region is paramount. The Ministers reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation, and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

10. The Ministers welcomed the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Developments in the Korean Peninsula issued on 5 August 2017. The Ministers reiterated grave concerns over the escalation of tensions in the Korean Peninsula including the most recent testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) on 4 and 28 July 2017 in addition to its previous nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches.

11. Noting that these developments seriously threaten peace and stability in the entire region and beyond, the Ministers strongly urged the DPRK to fully and immediately comply with its obligations arising from all the relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions.

12. The Ministers reiterated support for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and called for the exercise of self-restraint and the resumption of dialogue in order to de-escalate and

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create conditions conducive to peace and stability. Some of the Ministers expressed concern over the importance of addressing humanitarian concerns, including the abductions issue. The Ministers expressed support for initiatives to improve inter-Korean relations towards establishing permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, including the latest initiative of the Republic of Korea proposed on 6 July 2017 in Berlin.

13. The Ministers recognized that radicalization and violent extremism are common scourges of mankind. They reaffirmed their commitment to combat this plague through effective implementation of measures and counter-measures at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels under the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (ACCT), the U.N. Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and the U.N. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

14. The Ministers likewise reaffirmed the importance and effectiveness of the whole-of-nation approach as opposed to a purely military option in combating the problem. They recognized that preventive education, involvement of women and youth and civil society, promotion of peace, tolerance, respect for diversity and moderation as a counter-narrative, and more effective use and more effective measures in preventing the misuse of internet, social media and cyber space for terrorist activities of social media in countering terrorist messages online would complement dialogue cooperation in this regard.

15. The Ministers welcomed the convening of the Trilateral Meeting on Security among the Foreign Ministers of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia on 22 June 2017 in Manila and looked forward to the follow-up meeting to discuss the proposed plan of action later this year in Indonesia.

16. The Ministers welcomed the commencement of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Meeting on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Cross-Border Terrorism on 29 July 2017 in Manado, Indonesia.

17. The Ministers of the Mekong countries expressed their gratitude to Japan's robust assistance in various areas contributing to the development of the entire Mekong region in respect for each country's ownership. In this connection, the Ministers welcomed the steady implementation of the efforts to enhance not only "hard connectivity" but also "soft connectivity" such as facilitation of custom clearance and human resource development under the Japan-Mekong Connectivity Initiative established at the 9<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting. In this light, the Ministers appreciated that a "vibrant and effective" connectivity has been substantially

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strengthened and also expressed their determinations to address the challenges recognized by the senior-level officials in order to further strengthen the regional connectivity. In this respect, the Ministers of the Mekong countries welcomed Japan's intention to host a four-day workshop (from 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> September) to address the regional challenges on "soft connectivity" such as custom clearance.

18. Regarding the industrial infrastructure development in the Mekong region and the strengthening of "hard connectivity", the first pillar of the "New Tokyo Strategy 2015", the Ministers of the Mekong countries valued that Japan, collaborating with organizations such as the Asian Development Bank, has been steadily implementing the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" and the "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure", and reiterated the importance of developing quality infrastructure with open, transparent, and non-exclusive use in accordance with the international standards in achieving "quality growth". In this regard, the Ministers of the Mekong countries expressed their appreciation to Japan for having provided assistance not only through the Official Development Assistance but also through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund to extend quality infrastructure to the Mekong region as a whole. The Ministers also expressed their appreciation for Thailand's partnership with Japan on infrastructure development in the region.

19. As for industrial human resource development and the strengthening of "soft connectivity", the second pillar of the strategy, the Ministers of the Mekong countries highly valued Japan's efforts based upon the "Industrial Human Resource Development Cooperation Initiative". In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Japan and Thailand on Industrial Human Resource Development in the Mekong Region and expected further acceleration of the human resource development in the region. The Ministers noted that Japan in partnership with Thailand had jointly supported human resources development through the scheme of Third Country Training Program on Skill Development for Material Processing for the Mekong Countries. The Ministers also commended that people-to-people exchange between Japan and the Mekong countries has been steadily promoted. The Ministers of the Mekong countries highly valued that Japan has been strongly advancing human resource development through such initiatives as "Innovative Asia" and training of young administrative officials, and promoting cultural and people-to-people exchange with the Mekong countries through various projects such as JENESYS2017 (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) and the "WA Project" which promotes Japanese language education assistance, two-way art and cultural exchanges and the cooperation in the field of sport.

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20. The Ministers emphasized the importance of the realization of sustainable development, green growth and human security in the Mekong region, and reaffirmed the vital importance of disaster risk reduction and management, the climate change adaptation and mitigation, and sustainable management and utilization of water resources, including trans-boundary water resources. The Ministers emphasized the importance of taking a holistic approach in development of capacity for stakeholders, trans-boundary and multi-hazard early warning system, data information sharing platform, and comprehensive preparedness and emergency response plan to timely and effectively address the impacts caused by either natural or man-made disasters and climate change in line with the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) framework. The Ministers expressed their strong commitment to further strengthen the collaboration between Mekong-Japan Cooperation and the Mekong River Commission for the sustainable development in the Mekong River Basin. In this connection and in line with “Sustainable Development towards the Realization of a Green Mekong”, the third pillar of the strategy, the Ministers decided to share knowledge and to deepen the discussion in order to realize preservation of the environment and economic growth. This could take place in various fora, in particular, during the 5<sup>th</sup> Green Mekong Forum in Thailand.

21. The Ministers emphasized the importance of continuous cooperation between public and private sectors to further economic growth of the Mekong region. In this regard, the Ministers valued the Special Forum for Promotion of Public and Private Cooperation in the Mekong Region held in Tokyo in November 2016 where government officials and private sectors gathered and had constructive discussions. The Ministers also acknowledged the progress of the “Coordination with Various Stakeholders,” the fourth pillar of the strategy, through the participation in the above-mentioned fora.

22. The Ministers confirmed the convening of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting in the Republic of the Philippines in November 2017, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in the Republic of Singapore in 2018.