

## Joint Statement of the Ninth Mekong-Japan Summit

1. The Heads of State/Government of Japan, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Social Republic of Viet Nam, met in Manila, the Philippines on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017, for the Ninth Mekong-Japan Summit.
2. The Leaders appreciated the discussions and outcomes of the Tenth Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2017 and the Ninth Mekong-Japan Economic Ministers' Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017, and reaffirmed their commitment to further promote cooperation for the development, connectivity and sustainability of the Mekong region through various frameworks.
3. The Leaders highly valued the progress made on the implementation of the "New Tokyo Strategy 2015," supported by concrete plans such as the "Mekong-Japan Action Plan for Realization of the New Tokyo Strategy 2015," the "Japan-Mekong Connectivity Initiative," and the "Mekong Industrial Development Vision" (MIDV) and its Work Programme. As for the implementation of the "New Tokyo Strategy 2015," Japan has implemented more than two-thirds of the 750 billion yen it committed. The Leaders of the Mekong countries expressed their gratitude for the Japanese assistance, which respects each country's development priority and ownership, and looked forward to the full implementation of "Mekong-Japan Action Plan for Realization of the New Tokyo Strategy 2015." They noted with satisfaction that Japan's efforts for realizing "quality growth" and narrowing development gap have made significant contributions to the region. They also valued the employment creation and human resources development by the Japanese private sector, which activate economic corridors that will lead to sustainable development in the region. In addition, they welcomed Japan's complementary role in the implementation of the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Strategy (ACMECS) Master Plan.
4. The Leaders celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and stressed the importance of maintaining and enhancing unity and centrality of ASEAN in the ASEAN-led mechanisms. They also expressed their determination to further strengthen the partnership between Japan and ASEAN, in particular Japan and the Mekong countries, through political dialogue and consultation on cooperation issues of common interests and concerns, including political, economic and trade issues, defense and security cooperation, and people-to-people exchange. This year also marks the 25<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of Japan's first-ever full-scale participation in the peacekeeping mission, conducted in Cambodia, which led to the formation of its policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation. The Leaders emphasized the importance of securing a rules-based free and open maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region, and working together to promote stability and prosperity of the region. In this regard, the Leaders of the Mekong countries welcomed Japan's active and constructive contribution to cooperation and development in the region and the world through new initiatives such as "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," which also contributes to advancing connectivity in the Mekong region and beyond.

*Contribution to development of the Mekong region by realizing "vibrant and effective connectivity"*

5. The Leaders of the Mekong countries welcomed the projects delivered and the commitment made by Japan in order to realize vibrant and effective connectivity through implementation of "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" and "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure."
6. In terms of "hard connectivity," recent improvement and expansion projects of airport terminals and ports have increased air and maritime connectivity since 2015. Such projects include Sihanoukville Port New Container Terminal development in Cambodia and the Infrastructure Development Project in Thilawa Area, Myanmar. As for land connectivity, Japan works on Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project in Myanmar, continues cooperation on various railway projects in Thailand including the Bangkok-Chiang Mai High-Speed Railway, and works with Viet Nam and Lao PDR to strengthen Vientiane-Hanoi connectivity via land transport. The Leaders praised the measures taken by the Mekong countries in promoting quality infrastructure and emphasized the importance of developing transport infrastructure along the East-West Economic Corridor. To this end, they reiterated the necessity to advance Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects, and also the importance of carrying out infrastructure investment in an open, transparent and non-exclusive manner and in accordance with international standards for quality infrastructure.
7. The Leaders shared the view that enhancing "soft connectivity" is a key to further develop effective distribution systems and industries in each country and the region. At the Tenth Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, it was decided to address the challenges related

to “soft” infrastructure including facilitation of customs clearance and development of human resources in the area of infrastructure management and urban planning. In this regard, the Leaders of the Mekong countries welcomed Japan’s intention to host the second workshop on “soft connectivity” in Tokyo as well as its proposal to carry out several training and invitation programs focusing on “soft connectivity” to provide learning and discussion opportunity for professionals engaged in these areas. They also appreciated the long history of technical cooperation from Japan for enhancing “soft connectivity” in various areas in the Mekong countries. The Leader of Japan expressed its willingness to consider further assistance taking into account the results and the challenges identified by the survey carried out in 2017 by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The Leaders of the Mekong countries also shared the intention to accelerate their respective efforts.

8. The Leaders underscored the importance of human resources development as a key for sustainable and quality growth. They appreciated the progress of “Industrial Human Resource Development Cooperation Initiative,” by which Japan provided capacity building assistance for more than 12,000 people in JFY 2016. The Leader of Japan expressed its satisfaction with the progress made thus far in accepting students under “Innovative Asia.”
9. The Leaders welcomed the concept of “Connected Mekong Industrial Development” adopted at the Ninth Mekong-Japan Economic Ministers’ Meeting as a future direction of Mekong-Japan economic and industrial cooperation for further implementation of the MIDV through government-industry collaboration. The concept comprises three components, which are “Connected Industry,” “Connected Logistics” and “Connected Human Resources.” In order to realize this concept, the Leaders of the Mekong countries appreciated the concrete support from Japan in the following areas: a) Industrial structure upgrade and new industry nurturing, b) Enhancement of economic competitiveness in rural areas, c) Promoting quality infrastructure investment and enhancing infrastructure connectivity and d) Industry-academia-government collaboration in human resources development and IT capabilities development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) including capacity building to promote the region’s Industry 4.0. In addition, they noted with appreciation that Japan in partnership with Thailand had jointly supported human resources development through the scheme of Third Country Training Programme (TCTP) on Skill Development for Material Processing for Mekong Countries. They also reaffirmed their commitments to build the Mekong Sub-region as the core of Asian Value Chain Network through the implementation of “Connected Mekong Industrial Development”

“concept.

10. The Leaders renewed their intention to further collaborate with the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Asian Development Bank (ADB), the ASEAN-Japan Center and other relevant international organizations. In this light, the Leaders welcomed progress made in the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme and commencement of the OECD Country Programme with Thailand, and hoped that Thailand would make the best use of the Programme. The Leaders also noted with satisfaction the progress of cooperation between Japan and Thailand particularly including close coordination between JICA and Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) of Thailand for effective implementation of projects from the Thailand-Cambodia border to National Road No. 5 in Cambodia. They also appreciated the signing of Partnership Agreement between Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) and JICA on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017, which focuses on their joint effort in supporting human resources development in the Mekong countries, and in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
11. The Leaders emphasized that free and fair trade and investment are essential for economic growth and prosperity for the ASEAN region and for the global economy, and that any trends of protectionism should be overcome. In this context, the Leaders acknowledged that economic partnership agreement such as the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) should deepen economic integration and promote supply chain growth. Given that the Mekong continues to be an attractive investment destination with strong economic growth and potential, the Leaders of the Mekong countries welcomed investment from Japanese companies, and confirmed that they would work together in order to improve business environment.

*Measures for sustainable development including Human Security and Green Mekong*

12. The Leaders shared the view that improvement of the standard of living in the Mekong countries will be achieved through sustainable development. The Leaders of the Mekong countries welcomed Japan's support for green growth and its “ASEAN-Japan Environmental Cooperation Initiative,” which aims to further promote environmental cooperation in various fields including the development of quality environmental infrastructure addressing waste management, sustainable cities and wastewater treatment as well as marine pollution, chemicals and

biodiversity through the utilization of JAIF and collaboration with ERIA. The Leaders expressed concerns over damages caused by natural disasters such as flood, drought and salinity intrusion, and also shared their view that various impacts of natural disasters due to climate change should be addressed in a timely manner. From this point of view, Japan has implemented projects related to disaster risk management and counter-measures to climate change that account for JPY 145 billion in JFY 2016-2017 (as of October 2017) including flood protection and drainage improvement project in Cambodia and provision of facilities for earth observation satellite in Viet Nam as well as training programs on disaster risk management for more than 540 people since 2013. In addition, the Leaders welcomed the shared intention among Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Japan to establish the Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility (SEADRIF) to counter the risk due to natural disaster. The Leaders reaffirmed their cooperation for preparation of the Fifth Green Mekong Forum organized by Thailand and Japan in February 2018, during which climate change and disaster risk management could be discussed among others.

13. The Leaders stressed the vital importance of sustainable use and management of water resources and environmental preservation of the Mekong River, and reaffirmed their close cooperation with regional and international organizations, Mekong River Commission (MRC) in particular. The Leaders of the Mekong countries expressed their appreciation for the assistance by Japan through the projects related to flood and drought management, and environmental preservation of the Mekong River. They also looked forward to continued valuable support from Japan particularly in the field of sustainable water resources management and capacity building activities on water resources and environmental management.
14. The Leaders expressed their willingness to provide better health care systems in the Mekong region, with the aim of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development. They acknowledged the progress made in realizing “Universal Health Coverage” (UHC) in the region since the adoption of “New Tokyo Strategy 2015.” The Leaders of the Mekong countries praised Japan’s efforts in this area both in public and private sectors, including the capacity building of policymakers and managers in the health sector of selected countries that are committed to UHC and thus will serve as models for other Asian countries, the opening of Sunrise-Japan hospital in Cambodia, the Project for Improvement of Magway General Hospital in Myanmar, and the progress of technical cooperation between hospitals in Japan and those in Mekong countries. They also noted with interest Japan’s “Asia Health and Well-being Initiative,” which aims to encourage community-based integrated care and

functional recovery care including human resources development, promotion of necessary healthcare services and improvement of access to medicines through reciprocal and mutually beneficial approaches.

15. In order to maintain stability in the region, the Leaders reiterated that it is essential to increase law enforcement capacity in each country. In this context, the Leaders of the Mekong countries highly valued Japan's assistance to enhance maritime law enforcement capacity, including the provision of patrol vessels, and to strengthen counter-terrorism capacity in Southeast Asia by way of human resources development in immigration control or other related institutions, as well as measures to counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism.
16. The Leaders highlighted the role of cultural and people-to-people exchange in deepening mutual understanding and trust among Japan and the Mekong countries. They appreciated the implementation of projects such as JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths) 2017, the "WA Project", which promotes Japanese language education assistance and two-way art and cultural exchanges, and the cooperation in the field of sport through "Sport for Tomorrow" program towards Tokyo2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Moreover, they noted with satisfaction that the ASEAN University Network/Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (AUN/SEED-Net) has contributed to strengthening ties between Japanese and Southeast Asian scholars and academics. At the same time, the Leaders expressed their readiness to address the challenges arising from increase of people-to-people exchange. In this context, the Leaders of the Mekong countries welcomed the signing of the Memorandums of Cooperation regarding appropriate implementation of the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) between Japan and Viet Nam signed on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017, as well as Japan and Cambodia signed on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2017. The Leaders affirmed their intention to continue working together so that such Memorandum will be promptly signed between Japan and the other countries concerned.

#### *Regional and Global Issues*

17. The Leaders reiterated their grave concern over the escalation of tensions in the Korean Peninsula and condemned the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 3 September in addition to its previous nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches. They strongly urged the DPRK to fully and immediately comply with its obligations under all relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

Concrete actions on the part of the DPRK would be important steps for returning to serious denuclearization dialogue. The Leader of Japan stated that they should not seek dialogue for the sake of dialogue but instead should maximize pressure against DPRK so that it commits itself to abandoning its nuclear and missile programs and then asks for dialogue. The Leaders reiterated their support for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner. The Leaders of the Mekong countries reiterated Mekong countries' readiness to play a constructive role in contributing to peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. The Leaders emphasized the importance of addressing humanitarian concerns, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

18. The Leaders underscored the importance of maritime security and safety by, inter alia, maintaining and promoting a free and open sea lines of communication in the region, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982. The Leaders of the Mekong countries noted Japan's constructive contributions to development and regional cooperation, including through its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy". The Leaders noted the importance of enhancing cooperation among maritime law enforcement agencies, such as capacity building assistance, joint exercises, information sharing including Maritime Domain Awareness.
19. The Leaders discussed concerns on some matters relating to the South China Sea and took note of the positive developments in ASEAN and China relations. They are encouraged by the adoption of the framework of the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea (COC), and urged the Parties to conclude a substantive and effective COC at the earliest opportunity. They welcomed the announcement of the start of substantive negotiations on the COC with China by Leaders of ASEAN and China at the 20th ASEAN-China Summit.
20. The Leaders reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, maritime safety and security, rules-based order and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea. In this regard, they further reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, emphasized the importance of non-militarization and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states, including those mentioned in the DOC that could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the South China Sea, and stressed the need to adhere to the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of

the Sea (UNCLOS).

21. The Leaders discussed the future Mekong-Japan cooperation and confirmed their intention to hold the Tenth Mekong-Japan Summit in 2018 in Japan.