

**Statement by Mr. Kazuyuki Nakane
State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the 24th OSCE Ministerial Council in Vienna, Austria
on December 7 and 8, 2017**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Participants,

(Opening Remarks)

I would first like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Austria, the host of this conference, and the OSCE secretariat. I would also like to offer my sincerest condolences to the victims of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in the landmine explosion in Ukraine in April.

(Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy)

Since the cooperation between the OSCE and Asian partner countries began in the early 1990's, I welcome its progress and the deepening of the engagement to and cooperation with Asia by the OSCE.

The Eurasian Continent consists of the OSCE member countries mainly from Europe and Central Asia, and Asia where the partners are located. Asia and Europe have historically developed close ties through active maritime trade, and have brought great benefits to both sides. Free and open maritime order based on the rule of law forms the basis for security and prosperity in Asia and

Europe. The Indo-Pacific region is the center of the vitality of the world, covering Asia-Pacific, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. We need to make this Indo-Pacific region an international public good that brings about stability and prosperity to all countries equally. From this point of view, Japan is promoting the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.” Japan would like to actively cooperate with the OSCE countries to realize this strategy.

Mr. Chairman,

(North Korea)

There are threats that seriously threatens the peace and prosperity of Asia and Europe. On November 29th, North Korea launched the ballistic missile which landed within the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone. North Korea betrayed the strong desire of the international community for a peaceful settlement of the problem again. Although some countries seemed to be evaluating that North Korea was refraining from provocative actions for 75 days from September 15th, in fact, North Korea steadily proceeded with the nuclear and missile programs. North Korea has announced that it succeeded in launching a new ICBM. This threatens safety not only in Asia but also in Europe.

Now is the time for Asia and the OSCE countries to unite and demonstrate, in strong solidarity with the international

community, that peace in the region cannot be achieved without denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and nuclear-armed North Korea will never be accepted. The whole international community must fully implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions and maximize the pressure on North Korea in order to fundamentally change the policy of North Korea. By doing so, we must create a situation where North Korea will ask for dialogue toward denuclearization.

North Korea has diligent labor force and abundant resources. We must make North Korea understand that they can enrich the people if North Korea takes the right steps. We seek cooperation from the OSCE countries to make North Korea express serious intent and take concrete actions towards denuclearization. Furthermore, Japan asks for understanding and cooperation of the OSCE countries for the early resolution of the abduction issue.

(Cooperation through the OSCE)

The problem surrounding Ukraine is a challenge to the rules-based international order, and a matter of principles. Since Japan highly appreciates the role of the OSCE, especially the activities of the Special Monitoring Mission, we sent a Japanese expert and provide financial support to the SMM. We will continue to support Ukraine's reform efforts and contribute to the OSCE.

It is also necessary to enhance the capacity of the whole

international community to combat violent extremism and terrorism. We have supported border management projects between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries through financial support to the Border Management Staff College and intend to continue such support.

(Concluding Remarks)

As the international community faces various threats, the role of OSCE as a confidence-building organization has become more important than ever. As the OSCE's longest-standing partner, Japan intends to continue working together with the member states and partner countries.

Thank you for your kind attention.

(End)