

Intervention made by Special Advisor to Prime Minister,  
H.E. Mr. Kentaro Sonoura at  
the High-Level Dialogue on Indo-Pacific Cooperation

I extend my sincere condolences to those who lost their lives and express heartfelt sympathy for their bereaved families and those injured.

Japan expresses its sincere solidarity with the people of New Zealand in overcoming this difficult time.

Terrorism cannot be justified for any reason. In close cooperation with New Zealand and the international community, Japan is determined to resolutely stand up against terrorism.

Let me congratulate Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on the successful hosting of this significant and timely meeting on Indo-Pacific cooperation.

As Special Advisor to the Prime Minister, I have been traveling around the world to share Japan's vision on a free

and open Indo-Pacific. This important dialogue today, led by Indonesia, has given us a precious opportunity to deepen understanding and promote cooperation to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific, building on the discussions to date among the EAS members.

Indeed, the EAS members have already been actively exchanging views on the Indo-Pacific concept. I am encouraged that the constructive discussions among our Leaders and Foreign Ministers last year regarding this concept have renewed the momentum for enhanced regional cooperation. Equally encouraging is the will among us to continue with a dialogue on this concept at the EAS, as reflected in the Chairman's Statement last year. In this context, Japan welcomes and supports Indonesia's initiative to develop an ASEAN version of the Indo-Pacific concept. I am convinced that this initiative will advance ASEAN unity and centrality, which Japan has consistently supported.

Freedom of passage and openness of sea lanes which extend from East Africa to the west coast of North and South America are of vital importance to the entire world. Moreover, enhanced connectivity will ensure economic prosperity of the region as a whole.

Japan's vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific is based on such a deep-rooted recognition. Our vision is simple: a) we will endeavor to promote and maintain the fundamental principles of international order such as rule of law, freedom of navigation and free trade, which are the foundation of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific; b) we will pursue economic prosperity through improving connectivity with quality infrastructure; and c) we will fulfill our commitment to peace and stability of the region particularly through engaging in efforts such as capacity building assistance as well as cooperation in such fields as HA/DR, anti-piracy, counter-terrorism, and non-proliferation.

These three pillars remain unchanged ever since

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe first announced the concept in 2016.

Let me start with connectivity.

We all share an understanding of the importance of enhancing regional connectivity through quality infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific where vast demand for infrastructure has yet to be met. Infrastructure projects need to be developed in accordance with international standards of infrastructure development, such as openness, transparency, economic efficiency in view of the project's life-cycle costs, and fiscal soundness of the recipient countries. We believe this is critical because if a project does not meet these standards, it may end up becoming unsustainable and even damaging to the recipient country's development.

Responsibility and accountability of all stakeholders, especially those of donors and lenders, must be taken very seriously. With this in mind, Japan as the G20 Chair, will address the issue of international standards of quality infrastructure at the G20 summit meeting in Osaka in

June.

Based on the commitment made at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit in 2016, Japan has committed itself to providing approximately 200 billion US dollars of public and private funds between 2017 and 2021.

In the Mekong region, Japan is contributing, through quality infrastructure investment, to the development of “the Southern Economic Corridor” and “the East-West Economic Corridor” which connect the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean across borders. The former also connects metropolitan cities such as Ho Chi Minh City, Phnom Penh and Bangkok, and the latter creates connectivity between the inland areas of Viet Nam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar to the two oceans. The roads and bridges that will be built by Japan for these corridors will contribute to doubling or even tripling the volume of commercial traffic as well as to reduce travel time by half. Additionally, the electronic customs clearance system Japan introduced in Viet Nam and Myanmar has reduced processing time from

15 minutes to 1 to 3 seconds.

Through these soft and hard infrastructure projects, Japan is making a full effort to improving connectivity in the Mekong region. Our projects also put emphasis on the growth of local industries and technology transfer to recipient countries.

Secondly, economic prosperity cannot be sustained without a sound security environment which is anchored in free and open sea lanes. Here lies the importance of responding to challenges for peace and stability, especially in the fields of maritime security cooperation.

Last July, I participated in a seminar hosted here in Jakarta organized by the Japan Coast Guard Mobile Cooperation Team, a dedicated team that supports foreign coast guard agencies in improving their capabilities. I was encouraged by the strong sense of camaraderie among the capable coast guard officers of Japan and Indonesia and their resolve to protect a free and open maritime order.

Japan will continue to support ASEAN's maritime law enforcement by providing equipment and human resource development.

Last but not least, the fundamental principles including rule of law, freedom of navigation, openness, and free trade are the foundations for peace and stability in the region. While we cherish our diversity in Asia, these fundamental principles must be maintained and enhanced as universal and a basis for a rules-based order. To this end, a collective will and proactive action are necessary.

The entry into force of CPTPP is a great example. In face of increasing protectionism around the world, we showed our resolve to establish free and fair economic rules in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this regard, we must make the utmost effort to conclude a high quality RCEP in 2019.

Japan's vision for free and open Indo-Pacific is an inclusive concept. We have no intention to create a new institution nor undermine existing organizations. On the contrary, we are eager to cooperate with our partners who share the vision to realize a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" or, as Foreign Minister Retno puts it, "a Peaceful, Prosperous and Inclusive Region." This is because we are aware that such goal cannot be reached by just one country.

I completely share the view that we can seek synergy among the various concepts and complement each other's initiatives toward this shared goal. In so doing, we do not need to blend the respective concepts into one.

Today, Foreign Minister Retno shared with us Indonesia's view. Its two pillars, "Maritime cooperation" and "Connectivity and Infrastructure," coincide with those of Japan's vision. It is obvious that there is a huge potential for Japan-Indonesia and Japan-ASEAN cooperation to realize our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.



Our shared aspiration for a free and open Indo-Pacific is almost natural, because we all know in looking at our history that such an order has contributed to peace and prosperity for so long. But at the same time, we share the sense of urgency that we need to work hard to maintain this.

We have already shared the principles. Now it is time to put them into practice. So let us make this year a year of action to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Thank you.