

Co-Chair's Statement of the 12th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting

(3 August 2019)

1. The 12th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in the Kingdom of Thailand, on 3 August 2019. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and H.E. Mr. Taro Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and participated by H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana, Senior Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia, H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, H.E. Mr. Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Tokyo Strategy 2018

2. The Ministers highly appreciated the progress of Mekong-Japan cooperation based on the "Tokyo Strategy 2018", adopted at the 10th Mekong-Japan Summit held in Tokyo, on 9 October 2018, which puts forward a future vision for the development of the Mekong region. The Ministers renewed their commitment to actively formulate and steadily implement the Mekong-Japan cooperation projects under the three main pillars of the Tokyo Strategy 2018: Vibrant and Effective Connectivity, People-Centered Society and Realization of a Green Mekong. The Ministers noted that Japan in partnership with Thailand has jointly supported human resources development for Mekong Countries through Third Country Training Program (TCTP) which both sides shared knowledge and experiences for other Mekong countries towards the ASEAN integration and contributing to the achievement of SDGs by 2030. The Ministers also recognized the importance of international standards of "quality infrastructure" development such as "G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment" including openness, transparency, economic efficiency, debt sustainability of recipient countries. To this end, the Ministers welcomed the infrastructure development projects being carried out under the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" and the "Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure."

3. The Ministers of Mekong Countries welcomed Japan's participation as a partner in establishing smart cities as smart sustainable cities to promoting economic and social development along side with environmental protection. The Minister of the Mekong countries also welcomed the framework of ASEAN Smart Cities which was introduced to Japan for consideration.

Mekong-Japan Cooperation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

4. The Ministers reviewed the current status of the Action Plan for "A Decade toward the Green Mekong" Initiative adopted in November 2009. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction to the progress made in various projects of the Action Plan and appreciated their contribution to development and prosperity in the Mekong region. The Ministers emphasized the importance of strengthening the links between national, regional and global follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Ministers also emphasized the importance of economic development in conformity with environmental protection in the Mekong region and the vital importance of sustainable management of the Mekong river. The Ministers reiterated their determination to take further actions for achieving the SDGs in the region. The Ministers stressed their commitments to further collaborate between Mekong-Japan cooperation and regional organization including the Mekong River Commission to address the water related issues in the Mekong River Basin, especially regarding the sustainable management of water resources, including natural disaster management (flood and drought forecasting) and climate change adaptation.

5. The Ministers reached the common recognition regarding the approach of "Mekong-Japan Initiative for SDGs toward 2030"; 1) a region-wide approach, 2) an open approach and 3) a public-private cooperative approach. The Ministers affirmed that these approaches are in line with ASEAN-led understandings relating to SDGs. The Ministers identified priority areas in the "Initiative" as follows: 1) Environmental and urban issues, 2) Sustainable natural resource management and utilization and 3) Inclusive growth. The Ministers recommitted to the promotion of complementarities between the "Mekong-Japan Initiative for SDGs towards 2030" and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. The Ministers instructed their SOMs to work towards the adoption of the "Mekong-Japan Initiative for SDGs toward 2030" at the Mekong-Japan summit in Bangkok in November this year. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the inputs of the Sixth Green Mekong Forum, co-hosted by Thailand and Japan on 8 July 2019 in Bangkok, where inter-sectoral participants across generations joined discussions and exchanged views on issues to promote SDGs in Mekong region. Moreover, the Ministers congratulated the successful hosting of the G20 Osaka Summit and the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, and they expressed their intention to take into consideration the outcomes related to SDGs

of these summits.

Mekong-Japan Cooperation and Free and Open Indo-Pacific

7. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of continued efforts of each country to reinforce a free and open order based on the rule of law to maintain peace, stability and prosperity in the Mekong region. In this context, Japan welcomed the adoption of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific at the 34th ASEAN Summit last June which reaffirmed ASEAN's principles such as inclusiveness, transparency, as well as their objectives and common approaches to the cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Japan committed to support the effort made by Mekong countries in line with the ASEAN Outlook. The Ministers shared the common recognition that cross-border cooperation among the Mekong countries based on the principles of equality, shared benefit and respect for the United Nation Charter and international law is indispensable for promoting closer economic cooperation.

8. The Ministers also reaffirmed that the Mekong region, linking the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, has the geographical advantage of receiving considerable benefits from the realization of a free and open Indo-pacific. With regard to the Annex 2 of the Tokyo Strategy 2018 "Mekong-Japan Cooperation Projects in Synergy with Japan's Policy to Realize a Free and Open Indo-Pacific", the Ministers welcomed the completed projects and the newly formulated projects conducive to enhancing regional connectivity and maintaining regional peace and stability. Bearing in mind such progress, the Ministers expressed their determination to steadily implement the Mekong-Japan cooperation projects which contribute to and complement the promotion of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Mekong-Japan Cooperation and Ayeyawady – Chao Phraya – Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS)

9. Japan highly values ACMECS as Mekong countries' own initiative and reiterated its intention to support ACMECS through the Mekong-Japan cooperation. The Ministers have also supported the synergy between Mekong-Japan Cooperation and ACMECS and other sub-regional and regional frameworks and initiatives. The Ministers welcomed Japan's participation in ACMECS as Development Partner to support inclusive and sustainable development of the countries in the Mekong region, and expressed their determination to make unified efforts in order to accelerate the realization of the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023), including the implementation of cross-border

cooperation. In this connection, the Minister expressed satisfaction of the outcome of the ACMECS Senior Officials' Meeting with Japan on 29 July 2019 at the sidelines of the 52nd AMM/PMC Meetings in Bangkok, in which both sides discussed ways and means to enhance Japan's contributions to the implementation of the ACMECS Master Plan.

Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2019

10. The Ministers highly appreciated that "Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2019" is not only accelerating people-to-people exchange but also deepening mutual understanding among Japan and the Mekong countries, thereby contributing to strengthening the "People-To-People Connectivity".

11. In this regard, the Ministers appreciated that more than 100 events have already been endorsed as the Mekong-Japan Exchange Year events. Moreover, the Ministers highly appreciated the activities of the Japan Foundation Asia Center in the Mekong region and expressed their strong hope that cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and the region will be further promoted by the center.

12. The Ministers underlined that the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo provide many opportunities to deepen cooperation in the field of sport. The Ministers think highly of the friendship among Japanese local communities and national teams of the Mekong countries based on the "Host Town Initiative", and highly expect that the Tokyo 2020 will definitely develop the people-to-people connectivity among Japan and the Mekong countries and solidify the foundation of the "People-Centered Society". In this regard, the Ministers noted that Japan in partnership with Thailand has jointly supported capacity building for athletes with psychological disabilities/autism from Mekong countries.

Regional and Global Issues

13. The Ministers exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern, including trade issues, the situation in the Korean Peninsula, terrorism and transnational crime, cybersecurity, non-proliferation, sustainable development cooperation and recent developments in the South China Sea. The Ministers reaffirmed the positive advances brought about through the inter-Korean Summits, and the U.S.-DPRK Summits as well as welcomed the recent meeting between the Leaders of the U.S. and the DPRK at the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) on the Korean Peninsula. They reiterated the importance of international efforts to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible

denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, the fulfillment of relevant UN Security Council obligations, by all UN Members, and the establishment of lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The Ministers underscored the importance of ASEAN-led platforms such as the ARF in promoting a conducive atmosphere to peaceful dialogue amongst the parties concerned. The Ministers further decided to continue cooperation on counterterrorism, including the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2396 on cybersecurity, and on sustainable development cooperation. The Ministers discussed the importance of promoting a rules-based order in the region, including through upholding international law such as the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea, underscored the importance of full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and were encouraged by the progress made in the negotiations of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). They 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 UNCLOS. They also emphasised the importance of nonmilitarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of all activities by claimants and all other states.

14. In the context of discussions on the situation in the Korean Peninsula, some Ministers emphasised the importance of addressing humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the resolution of the abductions issue.

13th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting

15. The Ministers confirmed the convening of the 13th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Japan in 2020.