

Japan-EU Leaders VTC Meeting Joint Press Release

1. H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, and H.E. Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, held a Leaders Meeting via VTC on 26 May 2020.

2. The leaders expressed their deepest sympathy with the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. They recognised that global solidarity, cooperation and effective multilateralism are required more than ever to defeat the virus as well as to ensure economic recovery. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to continue tackling global challenges together in the international arena based upon the close and strong Japan-EU relations.

3. The leaders confirmed that both Japan and the EU are sparing no effort to stop the COVID-19 pandemic, protect lives, and mitigate the social and economic consequences, in keeping with their principles and values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and non-discrimination. They are promoting global coordination in various international fora such as the G7, G20, and the United Nations system, and assisting vulnerable countries and communities in need.

4. In order to prevent future pandemics, the leaders emphasised the importance of strengthening our preparedness and response capacities, of sharing information in a free, transparent and prompt manner, and of improving international response including through relevant international organisations, such as the WHO, drawing on lessons learned from the current global responses. The leaders reaffirmed the role of the WHO in coordinating the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. They welcomed the recently adopted resolution at the 73rd World Health Assembly which requests the Director General of the WHO to initiate, at the earliest appropriate moment, a stepwise process of impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation to review experience gained and lessons learnt from the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19.

5. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to global collaboration and sustained funding for developing and deploying effective antiviral medicines, diagnostics, treatments and vaccines in order to make them available to all at an affordable price. They called for the future COVID-19 vaccine to become a global common good. In this context, they welcomed the successful pledging initiative of "the Global Coronavirus Response" that started on May 4, with the aim of raising at least €7.5 billion. Prime Minister Abe expressed his gratitude for the EU's initiative, and the EU leaders expressed their appreciation for Japan's contribution. The leaders confirmed their determination to continue efforts toward closing the financial gap, including the collaborative efforts for the success of the upcoming pledging conference of Gavi in June. The leaders announced that Japan and the EU will accelerate cooperation on research on health, welcoming in this regard the signature of the Letter of Intent on strengthening cooperation in

science, technology and innovation, which includes collaboration between Japan's Moonshot Research and Development Program and the EU's Horizon Europe Programme.

6. The leaders stressed their determination to ensure a robust economic recovery and rebuild more sustainable, inclusive and resilient economies, in keeping with the Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. Decarbonization / green transition, digital transformation, and the virtuous cycle of environment and growth, will be a part of the recovery strategy. The leaders welcomed the G20 Action Plan at the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting to support the global economy during and after the pandemic. They would continue to adjust their economic responses, using all relevant policy tools, including digital tools to prevent the spread of infections while ensuring privacy and security, and standing ready to provide further support in a coordinated way. They also underlined the importance of keeping the trading system open. Japan and the EU will cooperate to facilitate the flow of medical supplies, agricultural products, raw materials and other goods and services across borders, while ensuring that any necessary emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19 are targeted, proportionate, transparent, temporary, and consistent with WTO rules so that they do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global supply chains. They called for refraining from unnecessary travel and export restrictions. Looking forward, they stressed the need to make global supply chains more resilient, and will work together to reform and strengthen the WTO, through rule-making on e-commerce and fostering a level playing field, to promote international discussions under the Osaka Track, to further elaborate "Data Free Flow with Trust" (DFFT) with a view to facilitating safe and secure cross-border data flows through enhancing data security and privacy, to harness the benefits of the digital economy further underscored by the current economic crisis. They confirmed that transport services should be progressively restored on the premise that public health safety is ensured as they are key enablers of the global economy.

7. With a view to assisting developing countries, including in Africa and other vulnerable regions, the leaders mutually welcomed the commitment made by the EU, including its Member States, securing over €20 billion in order to help partner countries face the COVID-19 impact and Japan's commitment to step up its assistance to partner countries, not only by providing short-term assistances but also by supporting them over the mid-to-long term to strengthen their healthcare systems as well as by addressing the enormous economic impact of the current crisis. They also welcomed the financial assistance deployed by the IMF, World Bank and other international institutions, and the agreement reached by the G20 and the Paris Club on a coordinated approach to a time bound suspension of debt service payments for the poorest countries, calling for full implementation of this initiative.

8. The leaders also discussed the geopolitical situation in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. They reiterated their commitment to upholding the rules-based

international order and looked forward to strengthening practical cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, countering hybrid threats and counter-terrorism. They confirmed that access to transparent, timely, reliable and fact-based information is crucial for an effective global response to the pandemic. It constitutes the foundation of good governance and reinforces the resilience of our societies and democracies. The leaders confirmed their resolve to counter disinformation, in accordance with shared principles such as freedom of expression and the rule of law. The leaders shared concern that the spread of the virus may escalate some regional conflicts and make it more difficult to protect civilian population. They supported the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire amid the COVID-19 pandemic and insisted on respect for humanitarian principles.

9. They shared the view to intensify coordination to contribute to resolving regional issues based on international law, including eastern Ukraine, Afghanistan, North Korea, East and South China Seas, Libya, Syria and Sahel.

10. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Japan-EU strategic partnership. It will play an important role in recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and in tackling other common challenges that have not diminished. Encouraged by the initial positive results, the leaders expressed their determination to continue implementing the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement and Economic Partnership Agreement. They looked forward to holding a Summit Meeting in the near future when conditions allow in order to take cooperation between Japan and the EU further in the areas such as connectivity, global environmental issues and challenges, climate change, digital transformation, research and innovation, health, energy, free, fair and rules-based trade, and security and defence, transport and urban policy. The leaders confirmed that preparatory work in these fields should advance.