

Co-Chairs' Statement of 13th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting
“Mekong-Japan Cooperation for Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC)
and Integral Strengthening of Economic Relations”

(9 July 2020)

1. The 13th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held via video conference on 9 July 2020 and hereby adopted the “Co-Chair's Statement on Mekong-Japan Cooperation for Achieving UHC and Integral Strengthening of Economic Relations”. The Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Motegi Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan and H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, and participated by H.E. Mr. Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom 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. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.
2. The Ministers **Expressed** deepest condolences and sympathies for the loss of life and suffering caused by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and **Applauded** the solidarity and collaboration of international community against common threats, and **Underscored** the necessity of collective action in overcoming the unprecedented and severe challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The Ministers **Welcomed** extensive efforts by ASEAN in collaboration with its external partners and the international community in the fight against COVID-19, including the successful convening of the Special ASEAN Summit and Special ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3) Summit on COVID-19 on 14 April 2020 via video conference, which demonstrated highest-level commitments to collectively respond to the pandemic.
4. The Ministers **Reaffirmed** the commitment to the implementation of the “Joint Statement of the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)” endorsed by ASEAN Plus Three Leaders. In this regard, the Ministers of Mekong Countries **Welcomed** Japan's announcement at the Summit on the three pillars of assistance to ASEAN and Japan **Reaffirmed** its support for the initiatives announced by ASEAN countries, including the support for establishing the ASEAN Centre for Public health emergencies and emerging diseases.
5. The Ministers **Acknowledged** the vital role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, **Shared** the view of importance of initial response and **Recognized** the importance of following up 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.

6. The Ministers **Reaffirmed** the importance of “Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage: Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world” adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 October 2019.
7. The Ministries **Appreciated** the progress of the Mekong-Japan Cooperation based on the “Tokyo Strategy 2018” adopted at the 10th Mekong-Japan Summit held in Tokyo in October 2018 and **Shared** common recognition that the efforts of the six countries under the three pillars of the Strategy, have helped strengthen the resilience needed in overcoming the difficult time of the global economy.
8. The Ministers **Reconfirmed** the objectives and principles of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) which provides a guide for ASEAN’s engagement in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions and strengthens momentum for existing ASEAN-led mechanisms to better face challenges and seize opportunities arising from the current global environments, including the fight against the COVID-19.

The Importance of Achieving UHC

9. In light of the wide spread of COVID-19 around the world, the Ministers **Recognized** that achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) with better prevention of, detection of and response to public health emergencies is essential to human health and human security, especially in addressing future pandemics.
10. The Ministers **Acknowledged** the importance of measures including tracing system, nutrition, water and sanitation in addition to strengthening of resilient and sustainable healthcare systems for achieving UHC in accordance with national contexts and priorities.
11. The Ministers **Reiterated** the importance of Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages," and **Reaffirmed** their commitment to accelerating progress toward UHC by 2030 in collaboration with international community.
12. In this regard, the Ministers highly **Appreciated** the progress made in projects of Mekong-Japan Cooperation regarding UHC set out in ANNEX, in line with the "Tokyo Strategy 2018".

Mekong-Japan Cooperation in the Area of Pandemic Preparedness based on Efforts

for Achieving UHC

13. The Ministers **Emphasized** the importance of Mekong-Japan Cooperation in strengthening resilience of healthcare system including pandemic preparedness.
14. Drawing on the experience in controlling the spread of COVID-19, the Ministers **Resolved** to:
 - **Strengthen** regular, open, transparent and timely sharing of information, data and expertise on the situation, policies and measures taken by each country in combating COVID-19
 - **Enhance** scientific cooperation in epidemiological research, including collaboration with the private sector and creating an enabling business environment that attracts more investments, to accelerate development, manufacturing and distribution of diagnostics anti-viral medicines and vaccines, adhering to the objectives of efficiency, safety, equity accessibility and affordability.
 - **Establish** strong and self-reliant national healthcare systems including telemedicine, capacity building for diagnosis laboratory through preparation of medical equipment and development of human resources in the Mekong countries with cooperation and support from key partners and international community.
15. The Ministers **Expressed** their satisfaction with the progress made in Mekong-Japan Cooperation in the area of health including pandemic preparedness, and the Mekong countries **Appreciated** Japan's support through providing not only short-term assistances but also by supporting them over the mid-to-long term to strengthen their healthcare systems as below:
 - Japan's 56 million USD assistance in extending technical cooperation for medical workers and providing medical supplies to the hospitals and other medical institutions in the Mekong countries in cooperation with international organizations.
 - Japan's intention to provide further assistance to enhance infectious disease preparedness and response by the Mekong countries through providing at least 50 million USD worth medical equipment and JICA's technical training catering to needs of each Mekong country.
16. In particular, the Ministers **Recognized** the importance of ASEAN Centre for public health emergencies and emerging diseases that Japan expresses its full support for the establishment, to strengthen the prevention, detection, control and response to the future infectious diseases and therefore **Reaffirmed** their strong supports to continue close collaboration and cooperation in this regard.
17. The Ministers **Stressed** the importance of encouraging adequate resource and capacity to address public health emergencies in the Mekong countries and in this

regard, the Ministers **Welcomed** ASEAN's initiatives to establish the ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund to address COVID-19 and future public health emergencies, and the establishment of a Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies and Standard Operating Procedure for Medical Emergencies to enable rapid response to strengthen the prevention, control and response to the future infectious diseases and therefore their strong supports to continue close collaboration and cooperation.

18. The Ministers **Welcomed** Thailand's initiative under Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) on the "Project on Sharing experiences and knowledge transfer through cross-border medical networking system" which contributes to enhancing knowledge and capacity of public health personnel on case management, prevention and control of the disease, and creating a prompt medical networking system for real-time consultation.

Integral Strengthening of Mekong-Japan Economic Relations through Mekong-Japan Cooperation in the Post COVID-19

19. The Ministers **Resolved** to restart economic activities together with reaffirming their commitments as below:
 - **Establishing** resilient and sustainable regional supply chains through enhanced connectivity in the sub region and beyond in order to support economic development and financial resilience, restore growth, connectivity and tourism, maintain market stability, prevent potential risks of economic recession and advance the integration of Mekong sub-regional value chain.
 - **Mitigating** the socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable groups, especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and workers, facilitating their access to capital and technology, particularly digital technology, job recovery, quality job creation and capacity building.
 - **Maintaining** openness of trade and transport measures and prevent protectionism in order to promote flow of goods, data and services. This includes advancing and widening regional trade agreements in particular the RCEP Agreement, and supporting progress in WTO reform, including the on-going negotiations of rule-making on electronic commerce.
 - **Strengthening** food security cooperation through promoting wider use of technology and digital innovation in the agriculture sector, along with more sustainable use of natural resources, while providing support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the food-related sectors such as capacity building and facilitating access to market and capital.
 - **Encouraging** business and innovation partnership in agriculture and food industry, Bio-, Circular- and Green (BCG) Economy, quality infrastructure

development in accordance with international standards and in line with the principles of openness, transparency, economic efficiency in view of lifecycle cost and debt sustainability as stated in “G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment”, digital technology, industrial development and energy with the view to enhancing sustained economic growth and supply chain resilience.

- **Promoting** further transparency and sustainable financing practices led by both borrowers and creditors during liquidity stagnation.
- **Enhancing** business environment to encourage greater capital inflow to the Mekong and Japan’s markets.

20. The Ministers of the Mekong countries **Welcomed** the progress made in projects led by Japan as below, which contribute to revitalizing the economy in the region after overcoming COVID-19.

- **Employing** Japan’s Initiative on Overseas Loan and Investment for ASEAN to facilitate quality infrastructure development, micro-financing for women and small and medium-size businesses and green investment, in which the decision was made to build and operate a combined cycle gas turbine power plant in the Rojana Rayong 2 Industrial Park of Thailand and a solar power plant in Tây Ninh Province in Vietnam, and the signing of the loan agreement with Hattha Kaksekar Limited (HKL) of Cambodia for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Development Project through JICA’s Private Sector Investment and Finance.
- **Introducing** the COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan with a view to maintaining and revitalizing the economy of developing countries including Mekong countries through rapidly funneling capitals required response to COVID-19.
- **Implementing** 1 billion yen worth Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects in FY2020, as KUSANONE Mekong SDGs initiative, aimed at supporting the social and economic development of local towns and villages across the Mekong region.

21. The Ministers **Emphasized** the importance of Mekong-Japan Cooperation in promoting collective efforts in controlling and contain the spread of the pandemic, addressing the adverse impact of the pandemic on our societies and economies, and accelerating economic recovery and reopening in the post COVID-19.