

Statement by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs  
KOKUBA Konosuke on the occasion of the 17th Asia  
Cooperation Dialogue ministerial meeting

Your Excellency Minister Cavusoglu, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished participants, I am KOKUBA Konosuke, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. I am delighted to participate in this ACD ministerial meeting under the leadership of Minister Cavusoglu despite the resurgence of COVID-19 infections. I also appreciate Turkey, the ACD secretariat and those who endeavored to organize this event.

ACD is a forum of inclusiveness and diversity, joined by countries from the Middle East to East Asia. Regardless of the uncertainty due to COVID-19, I believe this region still has tremendous economic potential.

In relation to today's theme, COVID-19, which has spread worldwide since last year, is affecting societies and economies throughout the whole of Asia. Even as of the end of January 2021, confirmed cases and the number of deaths are still increasing and the effect on the daily lives is enormous.

Today, I will focus on the “countermeasures against infectious diseases” and “cross-border travel”, which are the keys to “The New Normal and Safe and Healthy Tourism”, the theme of this meeting.

This crisis once again reminded us of the need for global solidarity. To overcome this crisis, we must realize a “united world”, not a “divided world”, in the face of this challenge. In our fight against the pandemic, it is important to aim at achieving Universal Health Coverage, where no one's health

is left behind, guided by the principle of “human security”. Therefore, Japan has been promptly taking multi-layered efforts: first, addressing the current crisis of the pandemic; second, strengthening health and medical systems for future crises; and, third, generating an environment that is resilient to infectious diseases. Japan has provided foreign aid of over 170 billion Japanese Yen or 1.54 billion USD.

Also, Japan has helped to reinforce community health systems by establishing core medical facilities, promoting networking among them, and training health workers, in Asia and Africa. In the ASEAN region, Japan continues to provide support for the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases.

Furthermore, it is also important to utilize the resources of the private sector. For example, Japanese and Turkish companies work in collaboration to construct an urban hospital in Istanbul, Turkey under PPP, and it opened earlier than planned to receive and treat COVID-19 patients. We will continue to work together with governments and the private sector to overcome this difficult situation.

A new society in the post-COVID era cannot be created without reviving the damaged global economy and realizing economic growth. To bolster economic activities in developing countries, Japan is implementing the COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan of up to ¥500 billion, or US\$4.5 billion, over the course of two years.

With the growing concern worldwide over the new variant of COVID-19 with higher infectivity than before, we can never be optimistic about the impacts caused by the virus.

There is no change in Japan's position that we continue to establish a system in future so that more people will be able to visit Japan safely through more accessible procedures while carefully watching the situation regarding the infection in and out of Japan.

It is indispensable to accomplish a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law in ensuring the peace and prosperity of this region and the world. The importance of such vision has become more evident than ever in this time when every country has to work together to fight against COVID-19. In this regard, it is encouraging for us that at the last ASEAN-Japan Summit Meeting, we affirmed that both the AOIP and FOIP share relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and cooperation.

ACD, which covers the whole of Asia including ASEAN, the linchpin between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Middle East, which links Asia to Africa, is an "open and inclusive" forum. Japan will work together with ACD participating countries to overcome this plight.

Last but not least, this summer, we will hold the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. We are currently working together to advance our preparations for the Games that are safe and secure as well as inspiring as proof that humanity has defeated the virus. Also, we intend to make these Games an opportunity to send out a message to the world of our vigorous reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake ten years ago thanks to the support from the international community.

Let me once again express my gratitude to Minister Cavusoglu for leading fruitful discussions throughout the series of meetings.

Building upon the outcome of this meeting, Japan hopes ACD cooperation becomes even more meaningful and relevant.  
Thank you.

(了)