

Action Plan for Advancement of Strategic Partnership between the Lao PDR and Japan

1 Political and Security Areas

(1) Political/Security Dialogues

Both sides welcomed the active high-level visits with summit meetings held seven times in the past five years, and the lively parliamentary and political party exchanges. Acknowledging the fruitful results of Japanese Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu's visit to the Lao PDR and bilateral meeting with his counterpart Lao Foreign Minister Saleumxay KOMMASITH in August 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, they affirmed to further promote dialogues including Foreign Ministers' consultations. They appreciated the success of the third Japan-Laos Security Dialogue which was held in March 2020, and affirmed their readiness to continue promoting dialogues between respective defense authorities.

Both sides affirmed to cooperate with each other in the regional and international parliamentary fora such as ASEP (Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership), IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), and APPF (Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum), for better mutual understanding and for peace, stability and development in the region and the world at large.

(2) Disarmament/Non-Proliferation

Both sides affirmed the importance of the 2021 NPT Review Conference. They shared the intention to strengthen cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

(3) Security/Defense Cooperation

Both sides affirmed to put into practice the Memorandum on Cooperation and Exchanges in the Field of Defense signed in 2019. They shared the intention to promote security and defense cooperation in various fields including capacity building on Humanitarian assistance and Disaster Relief and acceptance of Lao Military Personnel in the National Defense Academy of Japan. In addition, both sides shared the intention to promote exchange visits of officers of various levels.

Both sides affirmed to consider possibility of the posting of Defense Attache to both countries in future based on further developments of the bilateral defense cooperation.

2 Economic Cooperation

(1) Overview

Both sides welcomed the adoption of the 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) at the Inaugural Session of the 9th Legislature of the National Assembly of the Lao PDR and further affirmed Japan's assistance in implementing it. They share the intention to maintain and strengthen cooperation in areas such as human resources development (including the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) and government sponsored students), fiscal stabilization, infrastructure development, agriculture, law and legislative development, education, medical and health care, sustainable clean energy, science and technology, disaster prevention, climate change and the clearance of unexploded ordnance (UXO). From this standpoint, Japan affirmed its support to the Lao PDR's efforts towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status. They shared the view that quality infrastructure is essential for the sustainable economic development. They welcomed the signing of the Exchange of Notes on privileges, exemption and benefits based on the Article 6 of the Japan-ASEAN Technical Cooperation Agreement as well as the Memorandum on Cooperation in the field of healthcare. They also affirmed to enhance collaboration with other donors and countries.

The Lao PDR appreciated Japan's support for the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to working together to develop the institution which will further strengthen ASEAN's regional capabilities to prepare for, detect and respond to public health emergencies and emerging diseases as a centre of excellence and regional resource hub. Both sides affirmed to strengthen cooperation on preventing and responding to natural disasters as well as public health emergencies including COVID-19 and other pandemic diseases that have an effect on socio-economic development.

(2) Enhancing Connectivity in the Region

Both sides affirmed Japan's support for the Lao PDR's ambition of evolving from a "land-locked" country into a "land-linked" one, and shared the view that the improvement of connectivity as well as the development of quality infrastructure from both the hard and soft perspectives are important for the Lao PDR to become a transport node connecting sea and land through the East-West Economic Corridor. Japan, considering the actual situation of power supply and demand in both domestic and neighboring countries, also expressed its continued support for the development of autonomous power policy through technical cooperation on strengthening power management capability for

regional power system integration and the stable supply of domestic power in the Lao PDR, in order to contribute to the stable electric supply and expand power trade with neighboring countries.

(3) Sustainable Development of the Lao PDR's Economy and its Industrial Human Resources Development

Both sides appreciated the outcome of Joint Policy Research and Dialogue Program for Fiscal Stabilization. In this regard, Japan expressed support for the enhancement and expansion of value-added industrial development and education aiming at improving the competitiveness and diversification of the Lao PDR's economy.

(4) Reducing Disparities through Balanced Urban and Regional Development

Japan affirmed its support for tourism development in regional towns and cities as well as environment conservation in the Mekong River basin while taking into consideration of the promotion of green growth.

(5) Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV)

Both sides welcomed the 55th anniversary of the first dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers to the Lao PDR in 2020 and appreciated that they are playing an important role in supporting the friendly relationship between the two countries as well as providing direct assistance to the Lao PDR.

3 Trade and Investment

(1) Promotion of Investment

Both sides shared the view to widely provide information concerning investment climate in the Lao PDR through holding investment seminars and to improve investment environments in the Lao PDR through the Lao-Japan Public and Private Sectors Joint Dialogue.

Both sides affirmed the importance of promoting infrastructure development for strengthening grid operation capacity to improve electrical quality and for mutual use of electricity, aiming at meeting the rising electricity demand in the region, promoting green industry development, improving the accessibility to clean energy and ensuring energy security. Both sides further affirmed to support ongoing capacity activities under power sector program to strengthen institutional capacity in order to achieve sustainable development in power sector.

Both sides acknowledged the need to pursue realistic, pragmatic and sustainable energy policy by utilizing appropriate energy sources and technologies for achieving both goals of economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases to address the

challenges of climate changes.

Both sides appreciated that the number of Japanese companies operating in the Lao PDR has been steadily increasing since 2015 including the establishment of SEZ for Japanese SMEs, and that Japanese companies contribute to expanding employment in the Lao PDR.

Both sides affirmed to share Japan's lesson in green industrialization policy and the implementation in order to enable the Lao PDR to become an Upper-Middle-Income Country by 2030 based on the Green Growth Development Policy of the Lao PDR.

Both sides affirmed to cooperate based on the expertise and best practice of Japan, including digital technologies providing solutions to socio-economic challenges, to accelerate the growth of Lao digital economy according to the Lao Digital Economy Master Plan 2020-2025.

Both sides shared the view to cooperate in tourism promotion through various occasions such as international trade fairs and other tourism promotion events, aiming at attracting more visitors from two respective countries and third countries.

Both sides affirmed the importance of establishing sustainable and reliable supply system in the region as part of Japan's efforts to diversify overseas supply chain in ASEAN.

(2) Promotion of Capacity Building of Managers and Entrepreneurs

Both sides shared the view to promote the capacity building of managers and entrepreneurs with a focus on youth and women through sharing good practices in business start-up and training in Japanese style of management.

Both shared the view to promote the utilization of "Initiative on Overseas Loan and Investment for ASEAN" and to conduct training in fields such as the cybersecurity and the creation of logistic systems under the ASEAN-Japan Technical Cooperation Agreement.

(3) Economic Partnership Agreement

Both sides welcomed the entry into force of the First Protocol to Amend the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement on 1 August 2020 and affirmed to work together for the effective implementation of the Agreement.

Both sides welcomed the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement at the 4th RCEP Summit on 15 November 2020 and affirmed to work together toward the early entry into force of the Agreement.

4 Social-Cultural and People-to-People Exchange

(1) Youth Exchange

Both sides welcomed the expansion of exchanges between young leaders including the visit to Japan by the Lao Youth Union delegation.

Both sides shared the view to continue to promote people-to-people exchanges including youth ones through programmes such as Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS Programme) and The Ship for Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Program (SSEAYP).

(2) Arts / Cultural Exchange

Both sides affirmed to further promote Japan Festival in the Lao PDR and Lao Festival in Japan.

Both sides appreciated proactive efforts of the Japan Foundation Asia Center since 2014 to promote cultural, sports and people-to-people exchanges particularly among the youths and intellectuals between Japan and the Lao PDR. In this regard, they shared the view to promote arts and cultural exchanges between the two countries in order to foster a sense of solidarity, mutual respect and understanding of traditions and values of both countries.

(3) Japanese Language Learning Assistance

Both sides welcomed the introduction of Japanese-language education to secondary schools in the Lao PDR and the remarkable increase in the number of Japanese learners, and highly appreciated the support activities carried out by Japanese experts and NIHONGO Partners for Japanese language learning. They affirmed the cooperation towards the further development of Japanese-learning education in the Lao PDR.

(4) Exchanges through the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020

With regards to the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020, both sides appreciated that four municipalities in Japan support Lao athletes as Host Towns by accepting pre-games training camps and that other interactions have been carried out through the “Host Town Initiative” and “Sport for Tomorrow” programme. In this regard, they affirmed to promote continued Host Town and sports exchanges even after the games.

(5) Exchange of Symbols (Japanese Cherry Blossoms and Lao Elephants)

Both sides appreciated the efforts of both Japan and the Lao PDR in planting and growing cherry blossom trees in Houaphanh Province and the active people-to-people exchanges between the two countries through the four elephants donated to the Kyoto city zoo from the Lao PDR as well as Elephant Festival in Sayaboury Province.

(6) Local Partnership Cooperation / Direct Flights

Both sides appreciated the intensified activities of Honorary Consulates of the Lao PDR in Japan including the new establishment of the Honorary Consulate in Hakodate as well as deepening and expanding municipal-level exchanges such as cooperation between Kyoto city and Vientiane city and between Takayama city in Gifu prefecture and Luang Prabang city, and assistance by CO-OP Okinawa to the Attapeu Province in the Lao PDR's traditional distilled liquor production.

Both sides affirmed to promote cooperation for the early establishment of direct flights and the expansion of tourism exchange.

(7) Promotion of Appropriate Sending and Accepting of Lao Human Resources

Both sides shared the view to promote admission of Lao trainees in Japan in an appropriate manner through cooperation between the two countries based on the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on the Technical Intern Training Program.

(8) Cross-Border Travel and Visa Relaxation

Both sides affirmed to keep making efforts to facilitate cross-border travel between the Lao PDR and Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Lao PDR appreciated the visa requirements' relaxation by Japan in 2019 for business persons, cultural and intellectual figures for the purpose of further advancing people-to-people exchanges.

Both sides shared the view to continue to work together for a possible visa requirements' relaxation by Japan for Lao ordinary passport holders to further promote people-to-people exchanges of the two countries.

(9) Promotion of Capacity Building

Both sides affirmed to promote capacity building and technical assistance for the Government officials of the Lao PDR in the various sectors such as education, vocational training, ICT/digital, laws, oversight function, prevention and anti-corruption, state auditing, natural resource and environment management, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), diplomatic training, public administration, and young leadership through the exchange of research, trainings, study tours and sharing of experiences. In this regard, Japan affirmed that it will continue the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) and the Project for Training Program on Leadership Enhancement for Leaders implemented by JICA.

5 Cooperation on Regional and International Issues

(1) FOIP / AOIP / ASEAN

Both sides noted that both the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept share relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and cooperation. They reaffirmed that they will further reinforce the ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership through enhanced practical cooperation and synergy in the four areas as outlined in the AOIP.

Both sides shared the commitment to working closely on the issues related to the region such as the establishment of ASEAN Community and the enhancement of EAS, and reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN centrality and unity.

(2) Transnational Crime / Counter-terrorism

Both sides affirmed that international cooperation is indispensable in the areas of countering transnational crimes and terrorism, which any single country alone cannot cope with, and shared the view to strengthen collaboration in these areas.

(3) Maritime Order

Both sides reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation and overflight. Noting the recent developments in the region, they reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability, avoid actions that may further complicate the situation and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

(4) Korean Peninsula

Both sides shared the view that maintenance of peace, security and stability in the Korean Peninsula is of great importance. They called for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and reaffirmed the importance of fully implementing the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the 2005 Six-party Talks Joint Statement. They also underlined the importance of addressing the issues of humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the abductions issue.

(5) Cooperation in the International Arena including Reform of the UN

Both sides reaffirmed the urgent need to achieve the reform of the UN Security Council with expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent

categories of its membership to better reflect the realities of the contemporary world. Japan expressed appreciation for the Lao PDR's continued support for Japan's bid for permanent membership in the Council and both sides shared the view to enhance cooperation to make progress on this important issue at this 75th anniversary of the UN.

(6) Mekong-Japan Cooperation

Both sides shared the view to promote cooperation under the "Tokyo Strategy 2018 for Mekong-Japan Cooperation" and the "Mekong-Japan Initiative for SDGs towards 2030".

Both sides appreciated the outcome of the 13th Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting held on July 9, 2020 and the 12th Mekong-Japan Economic Minister's Meeting held on August 27, 2020 as well as the successful outcome of the 12th Mekong-Japan Summit Meeting held on November 13, 2020 in a videoconference format.

Both sides also expressed their hope for the celebration of the Year of Mekong-Japan Cooperation Exchange in 2021.

(7) Whaling

Both sides shared the position to promote sustainable use of whales based on scientific evidence.

(8) Measures to Combat Marine Plastic Litter

Both sides shared the view to promote measures to combat the issue of marine plastic litter by utilizing the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to realize the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision which aims to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050.