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Efforts to Ensure Appropriate Development Cooperation

Japan's development cooperation centered on ODA has contributed greatly not only to the development and growth of developing countries but also to the establishment of firm bonds of friendship and trusting relations between Japan and developing countries. At the same time, it has helped enhance Japan's standing in the international community and ensure the country's peace and prosperity. On the other hand, there have been cases of fraud committed in ODA projects, as well as failures in delivering expected outcomes and delays due to unforeseen circumstances.

The Government of Japan has made various efforts to learn lessons from these experiences for the future, such as improving evaluation systems, enhancing transparency, strengthening project management processes, and holding dialogues with a wide range of stakeholders, including recipient countries and civil society. The Government of Japan will continue to strive to engage in more effective and appropriate development cooperation.

Furthermore, in order to implement projects with due consideration for environmental and social aspects, JICA has established the Guidelines for Environmental and Social Consideration as a part of its efforts to ensure the appropriateness of its development cooperation.

(1) Prevention of Fraudulent Practices

Fraudulent practices related to ODA projects not only hinder their appropriate and effective implementation, but also undermine trust in ODA that is funded by the taxes paid by the people of Japan. Therefore, fraudulent practices are absolutely unacceptable.

Based on lessons learned from past fraudulent practices, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and JICA have strengthened efforts to prevent those practices. These include enhancing monitoring systems (such as strengthening the function of the consultation desk for information related to fraud and corruption and expanding third-party checks), increasing penalties (such as extending the maximum period of suspension of eligibility for participation, increasing penalty charges for breaching contracts, and introducing a point-deduction system applicable to corporations that repeatedly commit serious fraudulent practices), and expanding the scope of suspension of eligibility for participation (such

as subjecting the groups of the suspended corporations and entities who have received business transfers from the suspended corporations to penalties).

Japan remains firmly committed to the prevention of fraudulent practices in ODA under the strong conviction that fraudulent practices related to ODA projects can never be tolerated.

(2) Safety Measures for People Involved in International Cooperation Projects

Ensuring the safety of not only JICA-associated workers but also all actors involved in international cooperation projects, such as employees of companies and members of NGOs, is a prerequisite for the implementation of development cooperation centered on ODA projects, and MOFA and JICA work on taking sufficient security measures and establishing safety measures on a regular basis. In 2023, the security situation deteriorated in Sudan, Niger, Israel, Palestine and other countries, and MOFA and JICA, placing the highest priority on human lives, strove to ensure the safety of those involved in international cooperation projects, including the swift evacuation of the relevant actors from those countries, while accurately assessing the situation and cooperating with international organizations.

Following the terrorist attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in July 2016, the Council on Safety Measures for International Cooperation Projects, in which the relevant ministries, agencies, government-related organizations, and experts participated, carried out its review and released the "Final Report."²⁷ MOFA and JICA strive to implement the safety measures²⁸ recommended in the report as well as to continue and enhance actions to ensure the effectiveness of safety measures for people involved in international cooperation projects. At the 2023 Council, which was made permanent after publication of the report, the relevant organizations and experts discussed circumstances, measures, efforts, and other matters related to the safety of those involved in international cooperation projects.

Furthermore, in the wake of the terrorist attack in Dhaka, the Small and Medium Enterprise Overseas Safety Measures Network²⁹ was established in 2016 to strengthen overseas safety measures for personnel associated with small and medium-sized enterprises

²⁷ Safety Measures for International Cooperation Projects https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/page22_000141.html

²⁸ The following five points are proposed as new safety measures: (i) Strengthening the collection, analysis, and sharing of threat information, (ii) A code of conduct of project partners and NGOs, (iii) Physical and non-physical protective measures, and strengthening training and drills, (iv) Post-crisis response, and (v) Raising crisis management awareness and improving organizational structures of MOFA and JICA.

²⁹ Small and Medium Enterprise Overseas Safety Measures Network https://www.anzen.mofa.go.jp/anzen_info/network.html (in Japanese only)

(SMEs), including those involved in international cooperation projects. With participants from ministries and agencies involved in the overseas expansion of Japanese companies, the Network holds a director-general-level plenary meeting about once a year. Most recently, the 7th plenary meeting took place in November 2022, attended by then State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yamada. The meeting confirmed that organizations participating in the Network are actively engaged in awareness-raising activities and conduct proactive outreach to ensure that safety information reaches SMEs. The next meeting will be held in 2024.

(3) Efforts to Address Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Cooperation

In the recent years, there has been a growing international concern about sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) in humanitarian and development assistance. In October 2018, the United Kingdom held an international conference on SEAH, and major donors, including Japan, signed commitments to strengthen efforts to tackle it. Then, in July 2019, the OECD DAC adopted the “DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance.”

In light of these developments, MOFA conducts awareness-raising activities such as staff training. It also makes available the summaries of Japan’s basic

position and the DAC Recommendation on the MOFA website³⁰ to promote public understanding.

JICA raises awareness of the importance of SEAH prevention among a wide range of relevant parties involved in JICA projects through its website, which posts the president’s call for eliminating SEAH,³¹ and through its employment regulations and ethics guidelines for JICA personnel that take into account SEAH prevention measures. In addition, it works to develop a consultation service as well as a response and monitoring system in case of an incident.

The elimination of SEAH was one of the agenda items at the Partnership Promotion Committee Meeting of the NGO-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regular Consultation Meetings, which were held in August 2021 and January 2022. In response, MOFA took measures such as incorporating SEAH prevention into the implementation guidelines for the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects since FY2022, and is continuously exploring potential measures in collaboration with relevant parties in Japan.

In December 2021, a joint letter to the UN Secretary-General, led by the United Kingdom and other like-minded countries, calling for further efforts by UN agencies to prevent and respond to SEAH, was issued and Japan joined in signing the letter. In 2023, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit under Japan’s Presidency, the G7 leaders confirmed its commitment to the elimination of SEAH in the G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué.

³⁰ International Efforts to Address Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) in Development Cooperation https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/about/doukou/page24_000019.html (in Japanese only)

³¹ Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/compliance/seah_eradication.html