

Chapter 4

Japan Strengthening Its Presence in the International Community

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Section 1

Japan Strengthening Its Presence in the International Community

In recent years, the balance of power in the international community is shifting dramatically due to the rise of emerging countries among other factors, while inter-state competition, in which states seek to shape an international order to their advantage as well as increase their influence, is emerging more prominently. As uncertainty surrounding the existing order grows, protectionism and inward-looking trends are intensifying. Amid such a situation, the year 2020 saw the global spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which reaffirmed the importance of multilateralism in the face of crises that no single state can address on its own. Under these circumstances, Japan must take on a greater responsibility and roles than before, while collaborating with other countries, toward maintaining and advancing a free, fair and transparent rules-based international order. Based on this recognition, Japan, through a variety of initiatives as described below, has been strengthening its presence in the international community by emphasizing the rule of law, and pursuing consistent and stable diplomacy.

1 Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

The Indo-Pacific is a region that supports half of the world's population, and an area of importance in security and economic terms that holds the key to global peace and prosperity. A "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," which Japan has been promoting, is a vision for ensuring peace and prosperity in the entire region and beyond, through establishing a free and open order based on the rule of law. The vision is now shared by a number of countries. For example, the "Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)," which was adopted in November 2020, affirms that the AOIP and Japan's FOIP concept share relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and cooperation, and declares that ASEAN and Japan will strengthen their strategic partnership through cooperation in the four areas outlined in the AOIP.¹

The relevance and significance of the vision are growing as we advance toward the post-COVID-19 era. Seizing every opportunity of bilateral and multilateral dialogues, including the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. meetings, Japan will advance coordination and cooperation with the U.S., Australia, India and ASEAN as well as countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

¹ The four areas of maritime cooperation, connectivity, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and economic and other possible areas of cooperation

2 New Rule-Making

In light of the need for new rule-making that meets the challenges of a changing world and emerging needs, Japan will lead necessary international efforts to create new rules.

As protectionism and inward-looking trends spread worldwide, Japan has demonstrated its leadership as a flagbearer of free trade. Following the U.S. announcement in January 2017 to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Japan led discussions with 10 other participating countries to realize the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP11, entered into force in December 2018). Japan also concluded the Japan-EU EPA with the EU (entry into force in February 2019), and brought the Japan-U.S. Trade Agreement and the Japan-U.S. Digital Trade Agreement into force in January 2020. In November 2020, following eight years of negotiations that began in 2012, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement was signed among 15 countries, including Japan. Furthermore, the Japan-UK Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), a new framework for trade and investment between Japan and the UK to replace the Japan-EU EPA between Japan and the UK, entered into force in January 2021 following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. With the signing and the conclusion of the TPP11 Agreement, the Japan-EU EPA, the Japan-U.S. Trade Agreement, the Japan-UK CEPA and the RCEP Agreement, a network of free and fair economic zones that cover approximately 80% of the global GDP is now formed, with Japan at its center.

In the digital field, which is becoming increasingly important in the post-COVID-19 era, Japan is playing a leading role in developing global rules on digital trade such as the Japan-U.S. Digital Trade Agreement (entry into force in January 2020). In addition, at the G20 Osaka Summit, held in June 2019 and chaired by Japan, Japan shared

its Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT) concept and launched the Osaka Track. In particular, on occasions such as the WTO e-commerce negotiations, where Japan serves as a co-convenor, Japan leads international rule-making efforts concerning the digital economy, particularly with respect to e-commerce and the data flow.

Japan has focused on building international rules in new areas including new domains such as cyberspace and outer space as well as maintaining national security in our economy and technology, which has broadened its scope due to technological innovations. This effort is based on the understanding that existing international law applies to these new areas.

3 International Cooperation Based on Multilateralism

While the global spread of COVID-19 is demanding more international cooperation than ever, Japan is pursuing peace and prosperity domestically and internationally through international cooperation via multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations.

To tackle the human security crisis arising from COVID-19, guided by the principle of “leaving no one’s health behind,” Japan is leading international discussions aimed at achieving universal health coverage at opportunities such as the G7, the G20 and the UN General Assembly, and taking initiative as a cosponsor of the ACT Accelerator,² a framework for international cooperation to ensure equitable access to vaccines and treatment, including by developing countries. Furthermore, along with efforts to overcome the infectious diseases crises, Japan is also swiftly implementing bilateral and multilateral cooperation including for reinforcement of healthcare systems with a view to future health crises.

Japan has also made various efforts to strengthen its presence in the international community

² ACT Accelerator: Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator

with regard to global challenges. These efforts include the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment (June 2019), which seeks to realize connectivity across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific; leadership for the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision, which aims to reduce additional pollution by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050, and the launch of the MARINE Initiative as a means to realize the vision (June 2019); and the declaration of the goal of realizing carbon-neutrality by reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050 (October 2020). Through the proactive and strategic use of ODA, Japan will continue to accelerate efforts to address global challenges such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In particular, climate change is currently the most important issue to address. With a view to realizing carbon-neutrality by 2050, Japan is taking steps to address climate change domestically while also working with other countries to lead efforts by the international community, including the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) scheduled for 2021, toward world-wide realization of a decarbonized society, which the Paris Agreement is aiming for.

As the international community confronts an array of crises such as COVID-19, the crucial role of the UN to unite the international community has never been more necessary. Therefore, in order for the UN to carry out its required functions effectively, the international community needs to take serious steps to reform the UN for the post-COVID-19 era. In particular, while making efforts toward beginning concrete negotiations aimed at the reform of the UN Security Council, Japan is seeking to be elected in the UN Security Council non-permanent membership election in 2022 as a means to further contribute to peace and stability in the international community. Japan will also actively address a wide variety of international issues through UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and opportunities such as the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (March 2021).

Amid increasing complexity and uncertainty of the international situation, Japan will harness its presence to coordinate international efforts on the global stage and demonstrate its leadership toward resolving diverse problems with a sense of responsibility and purpose.