

## Section 7

# The Middle East and North Africa

## 1 Overview

The Middle East and North Africa (hereinafter “the Middle East”) is located in a geopolitically important area: the crossroads of Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and South Asia. The region is a vital supplier of energy, representing approximately 50% of the world’s oil reserves and 40% of the world’s natural gas reserves and also is a market with high potential, pursuing the diversification of economy and decarbonization, especially in the Gulf countries, against a backdrop of a significant population growth rate.

Meanwhile, the region has gone through various conflicts and disputes throughout its history, and still faces a number of destabilizing factors and challenges. In particular, regarding the situation surrounding Gaza, following the terror attacks by Hamas and others against Israel in October 2023, the United States (U.S.), Qatar, and Egypt have made mediation efforts in order to achieve a ceasefire and the release of hostages. Diplomatic efforts have also been made at the United Nations for adopting multiple ceasefire resolutions. Japan engaged in repeated diplomatic efforts, based on its relations with the countries in the region and as a member of the G7 and of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and in close cooperation with the countries concerned to improve the humanitarian situation and help calm the situation as soon as possible.

As 2025 began, prolonged negotiations reached a crucial juncture, coinciding with coordination between Biden administration and the incoming Trump administration in the U.S. On January 15, an agreement on the release of hostages and a ceasefire was reached by the parties concerned, and came into effect on January 19. Foreign Minister Iwaya released a statement welcoming the agreement and urged the parties to implement the agreement steadily and in good faith. The G7

issued a leaders’ statement expressing their full endorsement and support for the agreement.

The influence of the situation surrounding Gaza prior to the ceasefire agreement spilled over to other surrounding areas and heightened the tensions and instability throughout the Middle East. In the West Bank, restrictions on economic activity and people’s mobility have exacerbated poor socio-economic conditions, while settler violence has expanded, creating friction between settlers and residents. Along the Israel-Lebanon border, there have been frequent battles and exchanges of attacks between the Israeli military and Hezbollah. In the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, attacks on ships by the Houthis (Yemeni armed forces) have continued, along with frequent direct drone and missile attacks on Israel. In addition, as the unpredictability of the regional situation increased, there were repeated exchanges of retaliatory attacks between Israel and Iran. Iran launched direct strikes against Israel using missiles and other weaponry in April and October, while Israel in turn struck Iranian military facilities in late October. Furthermore, in December, Syrian President Bashar Al-Asad, who had ruled the country for many years, fled into exile due to domestic unrest, and his regime collapsed. In Afghanistan, there are concerns over further deterioration of the serious humanitarian situation since the Taliban’s takeover of Kabul in August 2021.

The Biden administration in the U.S., which was inaugurated in January 2021, worked vigorously to address the rising regional tensions surrounding the situation in Gaza and the critical humanitarian situation, including by reaching out to Israel and other relevant countries, most notably by announcing proposals regarding negotiations for hostage release and a ceasefire at the end of May.

Given that Japan imports over 90% of its crude oil from the Middle East, the situation in the Middle East is directly tied to Japan's peace and prosperity. Therefore, it is extremely important for Japan to promote peace and stability in the Middle East, and to maintain and develop good relations with countries in the region. From this perspective, Japan in recent years has been striving to strengthen its ties with Middle Eastern countries in a wide range of fields that include the economy, politics, security, culture, and people-to-people exchanges. The 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum was held in Tokyo in July and provided an opportunity to exchange views on future policies for strengthening economic relations with Arab countries and to build a multilayered network of the public and private sectors between Japan and Arab countries. Foreign Minister Kamikawa held foreign ministers' meetings with Egypt and Libya on the sidelines of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)

Ministerial Meeting held in August. In September, Foreign Minister Kamikawa also held a Japan-Iran Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York along with a Japan-Egypt-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, where the foreign ministers exchanged views on the increasingly tense situation in the Middle East. In addition, amid the instability in the energy market in the wake of the situation in Ukraine, Japan conducted outreach to the Gulf countries to help with the stabilization of the international crude oil market, including through telephone calls at the leaders' and foreign ministers' levels, and confirmed cooperation in a wide range of areas, including energy security.

In 2024, several natural disasters occurred in the Middle East, including devastating floods in northern Afghanistan (May). Japan has implemented various forms of humanitarian assistance, including through international organizations, to address the damage caused by these disasters.

## 2 Situation in the Middle East

### (1) Middle East Peace Process

#### A Developments in the Middle East Peace Process

The Middle East Peace Process has stagnated since negotiations between Israel and Palestine faltered in April 2014. After the inauguration of the Biden administration in the U.S., there were momentary signs that indicated the resumption of cooperation between the parties, and there were some positive developments such as high-level contacts. However, at the end of December 2022, a coalition government that included a far-right party was formed in Israel, and since then, violent acts and clashes have occurred intermittently in Israel and Palestine, including in Jerusalem, resulting in numerous casualties.

On October 7, Hamas and other Palestinian militants launched thousands of rockets at Israel from the Gaza Strip, and a large number of fighters breached Israeli checkpoints and borders, killing and kidnapping IDF<sup>(1)</sup> soldiers as well as civilians, including foreign nationals. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed and more

than 5,500 wounded. In addition, more than 250 people, including foreign nationals, were taken into the Gaza Strip and held hostage. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared a "state of war" and the IDF launched large-scale air strikes on the Gaza Strip, followed by a ground operation.

According to Gaza health authorities, as of the end of December 2024, more than 45,500 people had been killed and 108,300 injured in the Gaza Strip, and approximately 1.9 million Gaza residents had been displaced.

As the fighting dragged on, international efforts are underway to reach a ceasefire and release the hostages. The U.S., Egypt, and Qatar played leading roles in mediating efforts to reach an agreement between Israel and Hamas. On March 25, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2728, which demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Furthermore, following U.S. President Biden's announcement on May 31 of a three-phase negotiation plan for the release of hostages

(1) IDF: Israel Defense Forces

and a ceasefire, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2735 on June 10, which welcomed the plan and called on Hamas to accept it, as well as calling on both parties to fully implement it unconditionally and without delay. In addition, senior government officials of President-elect Trump, who won the U.S. presidential election in November, began engaging with relevant parties even before his administration took office. In parallel with this move, diplomatic efforts to achieve an early ceasefire redoubled, including through the Biden administration's continued mediation efforts. Against this backdrop, on January 15, 2025, the parties reached an agreement on a ceasefire and the release of hostages which came into effect on the 19th.

On April 19, a UNSC resolution on admitting Palestine's as a full UN member was put to a vote but was vetoed. Subsequently, on May 11, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to upgrade Palestine's status within the UN. It was adopted by a majority vote, including Japan's vote in favor. In addition, following the legislation enacted by the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) on October 28 that would severely restrict the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the UN General Assembly simultaneously adopted resolutions on support for UNRWA and a Palestinian proposal calling for a ceasefire in Gaza on December 11, with a majority of votes in favor, including Japan. On December 19, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the obligations of Israel in relation to the activities conducted by the UN and other international organizations, including UNRWA, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for the purpose of humanitarian assistance and other activities.

Regarding international justice, on December 29, 2023, South Africa filed a case against Israel at the ICJ, alleging that Israel had violated its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In response to South Africa's request, the ICJ issued three orders for provisional measures, in January, March, and May. On July 19, the ICJ also issued an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. On

September 18, the UN General Assembly voted on a draft resolution based on the advisory opinion, which was adopted by a majority vote, including Japan's vote in favor. Furthermore, on November 21, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas military leader Mohammed Deif, on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes related to the situation in Palestine.

In the West Bank, Israel continues to expand settlements and "legalize" settlement outposts, leading to continued violence, including acts of violence by extremist settlers.

Regarding the situation in Israel and Lebanon, armed clashes between Israel and Hezbollah have continued since October 8, 2023, with civilian casualties on both sides. In September 2024, Israel announced its objective of ensuring the safe return of northern residents and launched air strikes across Lebanon, including the southern suburbs of Beirut. Ground operations began on October 1 and fighting intensified further, but about two months later, on November 26, the Israeli and Lebanese governments agreed to a ceasefire through the mediation of the U.S. and France. It was decided that the Lebanese army and security forces would deploy to their own territory over the next 60 days and that the IDF would gradually withdraw, aiming for a permanent cessation of hostilities. However, sporadic exchanges of attacks have continued in some areas even after the agreement came into effect.

## **B The Government of Japan's Efforts**

In its efforts to realize a "two-state solution" that allows Israel and Palestine to coexist peacefully, Japan, in coordination with the international community, has actively contributed through the three pillars of political dialogue with stakeholders, confidence building among the concerned parties, and economic assistance to the Palestinian peoples.

As a distinctive Japanese initiative, Japan has been promoting the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative, aimed at facilitating economic self-reliance of Palestine over the mid- and long-term through regional cooperation among Japan, Palestine, Israel, and Jordan. As of the end of 2024, 18 Palestinian private enterprises are operating in the flagship Jericho Agro-Industrial

Park (JAIP) project, creating approximately 285 jobs. In addition, Japan is mobilizing the resources and economic development knowledge of East Asian countries to support Palestinian state building through the Conference on the Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD). In 2024, a working level online meeting was held to discuss humanitarian needs arising from the situation surrounding Gaza. Cambodia and Laos became new official members in July. Since October 2023, Japan has provided humanitarian assistance totaling approximately 230 million U.S. dollars to Palestine and material assistance through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Furthermore, Japan decided to impose measures such as asset freezes on four Israeli settlers involved in acts of violence in West Bank, as part of its contribution to international peace efforts addressing this issue. As a member of the UN Security Council, Japan also played an active role in adoption of Gaza-related ceasefire resolutions, including Resolution 2728 and Resolution 2735.

Since October 7, 2023, Japan has consistently and unequivocally condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and others, and urged Israel to fully comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, in exercising its right to defend itself and its people. Japan has also made proactive diplomatic efforts by vigorously conducting meetings and telephone calls with counterparts from concerned countries and regions at leader and foreign minister levels and calling on all parties concerned to achieve a ceasefire and release of hostages, comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, improve the humanitarian situation, and calm the situation as soon as possible. Foreign Minister Iwaya issued a statement welcoming the agreement on the release of hostages and ceasefire reached between the parties in January 2025, and calling for its steady and sincere implementation.

Furthermore, Japan engaged in candid discussions within the G7 framework at various levels, including leaders and foreign ministers. The G7 Leaders' Statements on the situations in Gaza and the Middle East were issued in June and October, respectively, and the G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Situation in the Middle East was issued in August. In January 2025, following the agreement between the parties

on the release of hostages and a ceasefire, the leaders issued a statement fully endorsing and supporting the agreement.

## (2) Israel

Israel is a leader in advanced technology and innovation, making it an important economic partner for Japan. It also plays a critical role in maintaining stability in the Middle East.

The current government was formed in December 2022 as a coalition led by Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud Party with participation from far-right parties. In October 2023, a national unity government was formed that included the main opposition parties following terror attacks by Hamas and others. Debate continues within the administration over issues such as military strategy and the conscription system.

In relations with Japan, against the backdrop of the tense situation, Japan engaged in numerous high-level and candid exchanges with Israel. State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUJI Kiyoto visited Israel in February, and Foreign Minister Kamikawa held four telephone calls with the foreign minister. The minister also met with the families of those held hostage by Hamas in the terror attack on October 7, 2023, as well as those who were rescued after being taken hostage. Additionally, Foreign Minister Iwaya held telephone conversations with the Israeli foreign minister in October and December.

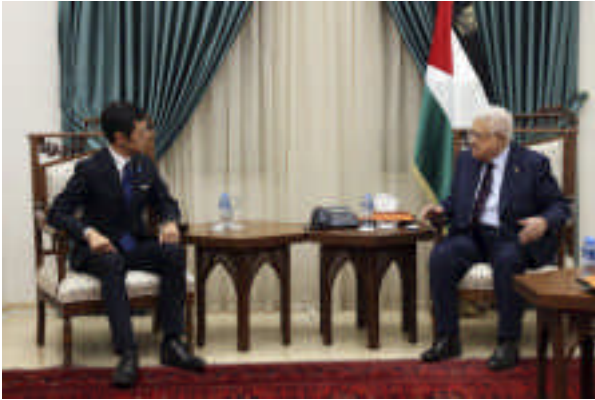


Foreign Minister Kamikawa receives rescued hostages and hostage families (August 22, Tokyo)

## (3) Palestine

Based on the 1993 Oslo Accords and other agreements, the Palestinian Authority (PA) began self-rule in the





State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji pays a courtesy call on Palestinian President Abbas (February 28, Palestine)

West Bank and Gaza Strip from 1995. Prime Minister Abbas assumed office as president after the presidential elections held in 2005. Following this, relations between the Fatah led by the president and Hamas deteriorated, and Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip by military force. In 2017, an agreement in principle was reached through Egyptian mediation to transfer authority in Gaza to the Palestinian Authority. In 2022, through Algerian mediation, the Algiers Declaration, a reconciliation document between Palestinian factions, was signed, which includes the holding of Palestinian Legislative Council elections within one year. In July 2024, representatives of 14 Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, gathered in Beijing for reconciliation talks and issued the Beijing Declaration. However, a state of division remains as Fatah takes control in the West Bank and Hamas controls Gaza.

In 2024, nine countries formally recognized Palestine as a state: Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Norway, Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, and Armenia.

Regarding Japan's relations with Palestine, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji visited Palestine in February and met with President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh. In addition, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone conversation with Prime Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Mustafa, immediately after the inauguration of the new cabinet in April. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a telephone call with him in October.

#### (4) Afghanistan

Located at the nexus of the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia, Afghanistan is a geopolitically important country that has historically been a crossroads of various religions, cultures, and ethnic groups.

The Taliban seized control of the capital, Kabul, in August 2021, and announced formation of a “transitional government” the following month, but there are still concerns about a lack of ethnic and religious inclusiveness, as well as ongoing significant restrictions on the rights of women and girls, including access to education and employment. The international community has expressed serious concerns over the August 2024 promulgation of the so-called “vice and virtue law,” based on their particular interpretation of Islam, which severely restricts the conduct of the people.

Also, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported that production of poppy, a raw material for illegal drugs that has historically been widely cultivated in the country, has declined significantly, partly due to the Taliban's control of poppy production after 2022. The challenge is whether poppy farmers can be led to move away from illegal drug cultivation and toward legitimate alternative livelihoods.

Although security has improved, sporadic terrorist attacks by groups affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Khorasan Province) have occurred in various places, and there are concerns that these will have an impact outside the region. Against this backdrop, Japan continues direct engagement with the Taliban and call on them to promote the social and political participation of all Afghan citizens, including women and social minorities, the elimination of restrictions, and the building of constructive relations with the international community, to prevent Afghanistan from becoming once again a hotbed of terrorism and isolation from the international community as it was in the 1990s. Regarding the human rights situation in Afghanistan, Japan expressed deep concern over the Taliban's promulgation of the so-called “vice and virtue law” in a statement by Press Secretary in August. Japan has also actively contributed to discussions on the international stage. In 2024, as in the previous year, Japan continued to serve as a non-permanent member

of the UN Security Council and as the penholder<sup>(2)</sup> regarding the situation in Afghanistan, drafting and coordinating relevant resolutions, and contributing to the unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2727, which renewed the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as issuing Security Council press statements on the situation in Afghanistan.

According to a UN announcement, approximately half of the country's population needs humanitarian assistance, and Japan has continued to provide humanitarian assistance and support for basic human needs (minimum requirements for a basic human life) through international organizations even after the Taliban took control of Kabul. In 2024, Japan provided emergency relief goods through JICA in response to the massive flood damage that occurred in Northern Afghanistan in May. In December, Japan made the decision to provide additional assistance of approximately 27.5 million U.S. dollars in the FY2024 supplementary budget.

## (5) Iran

Iran is a major Shiite regional power with a population of about 85 million that boasts abundant natural resources.

Japan has developed a traditionally friendly relationship with Iran for more than 90 years.

Iran held a presidential election a year earlier than planned after a helicopter carrying President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and others crashed in May, killing all on board. In the runoff election held on July 5, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian was elected as the next president, and the Presidential Inauguration Ceremony was held on July 30. State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi attended the Inauguration Ceremony as a special envoy of Prime Minister Kishida. In addition, on July 22, Prime Minister Kishida held a telephone call with President-elect Pezeshkian, expressing his high hope for Iran to play a more constructive role towards the peace and stability of the Middle East and to advance cooperation with the international community.

Against the backdrop of the situation in Gaza from October 2023, the exchange of fire between Lebanon's



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge (Special Envoy of the Prime Minister) pays a courtesy call on Iranian President Pezeshkian (July 30, Tehran, Iran)

Hezbollah and Israel has intensified. On April 1, 2024, a facility linked to the Iranian embassy in Damascus, the Syrian capital was destroyed by a missile attack, resulting in casualties. Later that month on the 13th, Iran launched its first large-scale attack on Israeli soil, using drones and ballistic missiles, increasing tensions between Israel and Iran.

On October 1, Iran launched another large-scale ballistic missile attack against Israel, citing the killing of Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in an Israeli attack in Lebanon on September 27, 2024, among other reasons.

In response, Israel launched attacks on military facilities in Iran on October 26. In response to these developments, Japan, through statements by the foreign minister as well as other means, expressed strong condemnation of any action that would escalate the situation in the Middle East and urged all parties involved to de-escalate the situation. Japan has also urged both Iran and Israel to exercise maximum restraint.

In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, there continues to be concerns in the international community about growing military cooperation between Iran and Russia.

Regarding the nuclear issue, following the U.S.'s withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran has taken steps to undermine its commitment to the JCPOA since July 2019. As of the end of 2024, Iran has produced uranium enriched up to 60%, left parts of safeguard issues unresolved, suspended the implementation of the Additional Protocol that allowed unannounced inspections by the

<sup>(2)</sup> Refers to the member states that lead discussions on specific agenda items and draft documents such as resolutions and statements by the chair in the Security Council.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and has withdrawn the designation of some IAEA inspectors of certain nationalities. The Pezeshkian administration, which took office in August, has shown an eagerness to engage in dialogue with European countries and the U.S., but Iran has yet to return to complying with its commitments under the nuclear agreement. Japan calls for Iran to respond constructively, including by cooperating fully and without delay with the IAEA, with a view to rebuilding the nuclear agreement.

Japan is an ally of the U.S. while also maintaining good relations with Iran for many years, supporting Iran's efforts to assist Afghan refugees and the development of a system for preserving wetlands in Lake Urmia and the surrounding area. Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in April, Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani on August 15, and with Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi on August 28. Foreign Minister Kamikawa also met with Foreign Minister Araghchi while she was visiting New York, U.S., in September. Additionally, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Araghchi in October. In addition to these high-level meetings, a Japan-Iran Vice-Ministerial Consultation was held in December. Japan has been making its own diplomatic efforts to ease tensions and stabilize the situation in the Middle East by directly communicating its concerns to Iran on various issues at every opportunity, while continuing these multilayered dialogues with Iran at various levels.

## (6) Türkiye

Türkiye is an important regional power in various respects, including its geopolitical significance. As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Türkiye plays a significant role in regional security while proactively pursuing multifaceted diplomacy with Europe and the U.S., Russia, and countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Türkiye has traditionally maintained a close friendship with Japan, as epitomized by episodes such as the Ertuğrul Frigate incident in 1890.

In February 2023 a major earthquake struck southeastern Türkiye, killing more than 50,000 people. In addition, with inflation putting pressure on the

lives of citizens, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was re-elected in the presidential election in May that year. In the subsequent local election in March 2024, President Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) suffered its first defeat to the opposition since its founding.

On the diplomatic front, while focusing on Europe and the U.S., Türkiye has pursued a multifaceted diplomatic policy that strengthens relations not only with neighboring countries but also with Latin America and Africa. Regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip, Türkiye initially showed a willingness to mediate diplomacy, but as the situation escalated, it has adopted a stance of criticizing Israel and defending Hamas, while also actively providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza.

Various dialogue frameworks exist between Japan and Türkiye. In 2024, a meeting of the Japan-Türkiye Maritime Dialogue was held to exchange views on maritime issues, including the maintenance and development of the maritime order based on the rule of law, as well as discussions on the situation in the East China Sea, South China Sea, and the maritime areas around Türkiye. Both sides affirmed their intention to continue regular exchanges of views between the two countries in the future.

The year 2024 marked the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye. In addition to high-level visits, including Foreign Minister Kamikawa's visit to Türkiye in January, commemorative events were held throughout both countries. In June, Türkiye's Navy corvette *TCG KINALIADA* made port calls to Kushimoto (Wakayama Prefecture), Tokyo, and Kure (Hiroshima Prefecture),



Special stamp issued on August 6, 2024, for the "100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Türkiye"



## COLUMN

## The 100th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Türkiye

In 2024, Japan and Türkiye celebrated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. On August 6, 1924, the year after the founding of the Republic of Türkiye, the diplomatic relations between the two countries were established following Japan's ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne and its entry into force. Türkiye was the first country in the Middle East where a Japanese Embassy was established (in 1925), demonstrating the great importance Japan has placed on Türkiye since that time.



Japan and Türkiye went through the difficult time of World War II. However, as Türkiye entered the war in its final stages, and the two countries did not engage in combat, their friendly relations remained largely unaffected. After the war, when Japan achieved membership in the United Nations (UN) in 1956, Türkiye appealed in the discussion of the UN Security Council, stating that “The admission of Japan, a great country, to the United Nations will make a remarkable contribution to the preservation of peace and cooperation in the international community,” and explained the importance of Japan's UN membership to other countries, devoting their utmost efforts to help Japan return to the international community.

In recent years, Japan-Türkiye relations have been increasingly developing across a wide range of fields, including politics, the economy, disaster risk reduction, and culture. The Second Bosphorus Bridge, the first structure in Türkiye to incorporate a seismic isolation system, was constructed with Japanese yen loans. The Marmaray subway tunnel, which is said to have fulfilled a 150-year-old dream for Istanbul, was also built with Japanese financial assistance. Moreover, in the face of natural disasters such as the Marmara Earthquake in 1999, the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, and more recently the earthquake in southeastern Türkiye in February 2023, Japan and Türkiye have supported each other through difficult situations, in keeping with the proverb “A friend in need is a friend indeed.”

In 2024, marking the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, high-level exchanges were conducted, including the visits to Türkiye by Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi in January, and Special Advisor to the Prime Minister ISHIHARA Hirotaka in May, as well as a visit by Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino in December. In addition, in June, the Turkish Navy vessel *TCG KINALIADA* made port calls in Japan over a two-month period. In Kushimoto Town, Wakayama Prefecture, one of its ports of call, a memorial ceremony was held for the Turkish *Ertuğrul* Frigate, which was wrecked off the coast of Oshima Island in the same town 134 years ago. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary, in addition to looking back on the history of friendship, both countries implemented commemorative projects at various levels in both public and private sectors. As a conclusion to these projects, a commemorative concert was held in Istanbul in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino, featuring a collaboration performance of Turkish folk dance and a Japanese drum (*wadaiko*) group. The event was a remarkable collaboration of the two countries' traditions and cultures, generating great excitement, and these projects concluded with the support of many people from both Japan and Türkiye. Japan intends to continue to further deepen relations with Türkiye and the ties between the two peoples.



A joint performance of Turkish folk dance and a Japanese drum (*wadaiko*) group (December, Istanbul, Türkiye)

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where it took part in events such as a memorial ceremony for the *Ertuğrul* Frigate incident. In August, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force's training ships *Kashima* and *Shimakaze* called at Istanbul as part of their long-distance training voyage to commemorate the 100th anniversary of ties. In September, the Japan-Türkiye Disaster Preparedness Seminar was held in Istanbul, where both countries shared their knowledge and expertise through reports on their responses to the Southeast Türkiye Earthquake and the Noto Peninsula Earthquake.

### (7) Iraq

After the Iraq War in 2003, Iraq enacted a new constitution in 2005, and a government formed through democratic elections is now in charge of running the country.

On the domestic political front, a state of confusion continued after the election for the Iraqi Council of Representatives elections in 2021, with no cabinet being able to be formed. However, since the new government was formed in October 2022, Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani has been running a stable administration with the support of a wide range of political forces. In June 2023, the budget law covering the three fiscal years from 2023 to 2025 came into effect, ensuring budgetary stability and administrative continuity. In October 2024, a Parliamentary Election for the Kurdistan Region was held for the first time in six years, and in November, a national census was conducted for the first time in 37 years since 1987.

Following the inauguration of the Al-Sudani administration, domestic security in Iraq has improved significantly. However, since October, the situation in Israel and Palestine has affected the situation in Iraq, with successive attacks conducted on U.S. military facilities in Iraq by pro-Iranian militia groups calling themselves the "Islamic Resistance in Iraq," and U.S. forces launching counterattacks against the pro-Iranian militia groups.

On the diplomatic front, Iraq is located between the regional powers of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, and is seeking to strengthen relations with neighboring countries and pursue a balanced diplomacy.

Since 2003, Japan has consistently provided support to Iraq, including economic cooperation worth

approximately 14.2 billion U.S. dollars (as of the end of 2024).

### (8) Jordan

The situation in Jordan remains relatively stable compared to other parts of the persistently turbulent Middle East region. Jordan has, under the leadership of King Abdullah II, played a vital role in promoting the peace and stability of the region, such as with countermeasures against extremists, its acceptance of a large number of Syrian and Palestinian refugees, and active involvement in peace in the Middle East. The international community highly values Jordan's contributions. Jordan and Japan have longstanding friendly ties, and the relationship between the two countries was elevated to a strategic partnership in 2018, maintaining a consistently close relationship.

The year 2024 marked the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Jordan and was commemorated with events held at various levels, involving both public and private sectors of both countries. Of note, in response to rising tensions throughout the Middle East region, including the situation in Gaza, there was close communication between leaders and foreign ministers. In addition to holding a Summit Meeting with Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Bisher Hani Al-Khasawneh when he visited Japan in February, Prime Minister Kishida also held a summit telephone call with King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein in September, during which they exchanged views on the latest situation and confirmed close cooperation between both countries. At the foreign ministerial level, Foreign Minister Kamikawa paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister and Defense Minister Al-Khasawneh in February, held a Japan-Egypt-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York in September, and held several telephone calls with the foreign minister. Furthermore, immediately after taking office in October, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi, in which they exchanged views on the regional situation, including the situation in Lebanon, where tensions have risen sharply, and requested cooperation in protecting Japanese nationals. Foreign Minister Safadi responded by saying that he would spare no effort in cooperating



Japan-Jordan Summit Meeting (February 16, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)

to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals. Thanks to this close communication, the following day, a Self-Defense Force aircraft transported Japanese nationals and others from Lebanon to Jordan without incident.

Furthermore, Prince El Hassan bin Talal and Princess Sarvath El Hassan visited Japan in November, during which a reception commemorating the 70th anniversary of relations was hosted by the Embassy of Jordan in Japan and served as a symbol of the traditional relationship between the imperial and royal families of the two countries. In terms of security, the cooperative relationship between the two countries in the field of defense is becoming even closer, with Vice Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff of the Self-Defense Forces NAGUMO Kenichiro visiting Jordan in February and Major General Yousef Al-Hnaity, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Jordan Armed Forces, visiting Japan in November.

### (9) The Gulf States and Yemen

In recent years, the Gulf States have been working on socioeconomic reforms with decarbonization and industrial diversification as key issues. The Gulf States are important partners for Japan from the perspective of energy security and other factors. In addition, Japan is promoting cooperation in a wide range of areas through frameworks such as “Japan-Saudi Vision 2030” with Saudi Arabia and the “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative (CSPI)” with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), based on the view that these reforms will contribute to the long-term stability and prosperity of the Middle East. In addition, regarding the negotiations for Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)<sup>(3)</sup>

Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which had been suspended since 2009, the first round of negotiations after the resumption was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in December.

Saudi Arabia plays a leading role in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and is an important energy security partner, supplying about 40% of Japan's crude oil imports. It is also the only Arab member of the G20 and is the leader of the Arab Islamic world, home to two of Islam's holiest sites. In response to rising tensions in the Middle East since October 2023, Saudi Arabia has played a leading role in foreign policy discussions among Arab and Islamic countries, including by hosting the Arab-Islamic Summit (a joint summit by the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) and the Global Alliance for Implementation of the Two-State Solution meeting. Furthermore, under “Saudi Vision 2030,” the country is promoting new initiatives in various fields with the aim of comprehensive socio-economic reforms. Through various talks, including a video teleconference meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister in May, a telephone call between Prime Minister Ishiba and Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister in November, a telephone call between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud in May, and a telephone call between Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of Foreign Affairs Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud in October, the two countries confirmed their intention to strengthen their strategic partnership and to further promote cooperation in various fields under the framework of the Japan-Saudi Vision 2030, as well as working closely together in the international arena toward the stabilization of the region and the international community.

The UAE is also an important partner in terms of energy security, supplying approximately 40% of Japan's crude oil imports. Through the visit to Japan by Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Sultan Al Jaber in July, and a telephone call between Foreign Minister Iwaya and

<sup>(3)</sup> Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Established in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. Its purpose is to promote coordination, integration, and cooperation among participating countries in all fields, including defense and economy.

Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Sultan Al Jaber in December, both sides confirmed that they would further promote cooperation in various fields under the framework of the “CSPI” and cooperation under the Japan-UAE Innovation Partnership and the Global Green Energy Hub initiative to strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. In September, the leaders of Japan and the UAE announced the launch of the negotiations for a Japan-UAE Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and the first meeting was held in Tokyo in November. In addition, in the defense field, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of UAE concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, which was signed in May 2023, entered into force in January 2024.

Qatar is one of the world's largest gas-producing countries, and it has been increasing its presence by leveraging its own channels with Iran, the Taliban, Hamas, and others to mediate peace talks between the



Japan-Saudi Arabia Summit Video Teleconference Meeting (May 21, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet)



Meeting between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan of UAE Jaber (July 4, Tokyo)

U.S. and the Taliban, negotiations over the exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran, and ceasefire and hostage release negotiations between Israel and Hamas. Through the Policy Dialogue between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Qatar held in November, the two countries confirmed to strengthen cooperation in a wide range of areas, including politics, economy, and defense exchanges, under the “Strategic Partnership” confirmed between Prime Minister Kishida and Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani in 2023.

Oman leveraged its own channels with Iran and the Houthis to mediate negotiations on the normalization of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, and negotiations on the exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran. The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force made a port call in Oman and conducted at-sea training, advancing cooperation and exchange between the two countries in a wide range of areas, including maritime security.

Kuwait is a strong partner with Japan, supplying approximately 9% of its crude oil imports. Through the Policy Consultations Meeting between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the State of Kuwait in December and other meetings, the two countries exchanged views on their cooperative relationship in a wide range of areas including bilateral cooperation in political, the economic, energy, cultural fields, strengthening of bilateral contact and exchanges, as well as cooperation in the international arena. The two countries confirmed to collaborate toward stabilizing the regional and international community.

Bahrain is home to the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, the U.S. Fifth Fleet, making it an important partner for Japan in terms of ensuring the safety of Japanese-related ships in the Middle East and stabilizing the region. Japan and Bahrain confirmed that they would enhance cooperation to maintain and strengthen the rule of law through bilateral communications such as a telephone call between Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani in April.

Stability in Yemen is important not only for the peace and stability in the Middle East as a whole, but also from the perspective of securing sea lanes,

which are directly related to Japan's energy security. In Yemen, the Houthis had continued to fight against the Government of Yemen and the Arab Coalition. After a nationwide ceasefire in April 2022, a lull has continued despite the ceasefire expiring in October of the same year. In 2023, several rounds of direct talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, mediated by Oman, have been held, showing positive moves toward a lasting peace in Yemen. However, in response to the situation in the Gaza Strip, in November 2023, the Houthis, who stand in solidarity with Hamas, declared that they would attack vessels related to Israel and "seized" a Japan-related vessel in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen, and continue to carry out attacks against vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Japan firmly condemns these actions by the Houthis, calls for them to refrain from any actions that impede the free and safe navigation of ships, and is working in cooperation with relevant countries to achieve the early release of Japanese-related ships and crew members, and to stabilize the surrounding waters. In 2024, the UN Security Council adopted the resolutions 2722 and 2735 in January and June respectively, co-sponsored by Japan and the U.S. to demand an immediate cease of all attacks by the Houthis against vessels in the Red Sea. Furthermore, in November, Japan and the U.S. led the Security Council in issuing a press statement condemning in the strongest terms the attacks on commercial vessels by the Houthis. Due to the protracted conflict, Yemen is facing a severe humanitarian situation that has been described as "one of the worst in the world." Since 2015, Japan has cooperated with international organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to Yemen totaling approximately 460 million U.S. dollars (as of the end of 2024).

## (10) Syria

### **A** Changes in the situation

The Syrian crisis, ongoing since March 2011 for approximately 13 years, shows no prospect of stabilization nor political resolution. The Constitutional Committee, established in 2019 through UN mediation to bring together the Assad administration and dissidents, has not convened for over a year.

In foreign relations, while Syria maintains cooperative relations with Russia and Iran, both of which supported the Assad administration, it was decided at an extraordinary meeting of Arab League Foreign Ministers on May 7, 2023, to reinstate Syria as a member as part of its efforts to improve relations with Arab countries that have been observed in recent years. Meanwhile, European countries and the U.S. remain cautious about resuming relations with the Government of Syria due to the Assad administration's use of chemical weapons and human rights violations.<sup>(4)</sup>

On the military and security front, the worsening situation in Gaza since October 2023 and Israel's expanded attacks on the Lebanese pro-Iranian militia group Hezbollah since mid-September 2024 have also had an impact on the situation in Syria, including increased attacks on Syria, which acts as a supply base for Hezbollah. Meanwhile, opposition forces led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) began taking control of the northern city of Aleppo around November 27, and on December 8 they declared that they had taken control of the capital, Damascus. The following day, the Government of Russia announced that President Assad had fled into exile to Russia. On the 10th, HTS declared the establishment of a "caretaker government" in Damascus and announced that a transition to a new government was scheduled to take place by March 1, 2025. The "caretaker government" also announced its intention to disband all opposition organizations and integrate them into a national army directly under the Ministry of Defense, as well as prospects for holding a national dialogue and drafting a new constitution. Also, on December 15, Israel approved a plan to double the population of the Golan Heights and advanced into the buffer zone of the Golan Heights. Meanwhile, Türkiye and Arab and Western countries have visited Syria and initiated contact with the "caretaker government."

Regarding the humanitarian situation, the major earthquake that occurred in the southeastern part of Türkiye on February 6 in 2023 also caused extensive damage in Syria, mainly in the north (with more than 5,900 casualties). The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria is said to reach 16.7

<sup>(4)</sup> The state's power violates the fundamental human rights of the people guaranteed by the Constitution.



million in 2024, and the number of internally displaced persons exceeded 7.2 million. In addition to various long-term challenges, the intensification of conflict in Lebanon since mid-September 2024 has resulted in a large number of refugees and returnees from Lebanon to Syria. As of November 12, that number has reached approximately 530,000, indicating that humanitarian needs are the highest since the crisis began.

### **B The Government of Japan's Efforts**

Japan strongly hopes that the violence in Syria will cease as soon as possible and that all Syrians will be able to enjoy fundamental human rights, dignity, freedom, and prosperity. Japan believes that the future of Syria should be determined by the Syrian people themselves and therefore looks forward to a peaceful and stable transition of power in Syria. In particular, Japan calls on all parties concerned to fully respect the will of the Syrian people, and to play a constructive role in promoting comprehensive political settlement and national reconciliation, through dialogue among the Syrian people, and ultimately peace and prosperity in the region, based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254. In response to the situation in Lebanon since mid-September, Japan provided a new Emergency Grant of 10 million U.S. dollars through UN agencies on October 29 to people who fled from Lebanon to Syria. Japan's total humanitarian assistance to Syria and neighboring countries since 2012 has amounted to more than 3.5 billion U.S. dollars.

### **(11) Lebanon**

Faced with various challenges due to the complex crisis, Lebanon has been in a political vacuum since the end of former President Michel Aoun's term at the end of October 2022, with no conclusion reached in parliamentary talks due to conflicts among political forces and a new president yet to be elected. Administrative

and financial reforms outlined in the working-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are significantly delayed, and the economic crisis is dragging on, with public services not functioning and high inflation. Since October 2023, the situation in Gaza has affected Lebanon through the exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah and others in the southern part of the country bordering Israel. Furthermore, since mid-September, Israel has conducted large-scale air strikes in Dahieh in the southern suburbs of Beirut, as well as in southern and eastern Lebanon. This resulted in one million people being displaced within the country. On November 26, the Israeli and Lebanese governments agreed to a ceasefire through the mediation of the U.S. and France. Japan welcomes this ceasefire agreement and strongly demands all parties take all measures to fully implement the ceasefire agreement, including the full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1701, and commit to regional stability. On January 9, 2025, a parliamentary session was convened to elect a president, and Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Joseph Aoun, was elected as the 14th president. The election of a president after more than two years of political vacuum can be seen as an important step toward the country's stability and development.

Japan has provided a total of more than 290.9 million U.S. dollars in assistance to Lebanon (including broad-based assistance) since 2012. In addition, in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, on October 21, Japan provided an additional Emergency Grant of 10 million U.S. dollars through UN agencies and other organizations. In October, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Abdallah BouHabib, where the two countries confirmed that they would continue to work together to calm the situation in the region and in Lebanon.

## **3 The Situation in North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco)**

### **(1) Egypt**

Located at the geopolitical crossroads of the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, Egypt is a major regional power in the Middle East and North Africa with a

population of over 110 million. Since the terror attacks by Hamas and others on October 7, 2023, Egypt has played an important role in the stability of the region through evacuations of foreign nationals and others

from the Gaza Strip, acceptance of the wounded and sick, and acceptance of humanitarian aid supplies from international organizations and countries worldwide and transporting them to the Gaza Strip. Egypt has also engaged in diplomatic efforts such as mediating between Israel and Hamas, alongside Qatar and the U.S., contributing significantly to de-escalation efforts, preventing further destabilization in the region, and leading discussions on the urgency of improving the humanitarian situation.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi was inaugurated for his third term on April 2, and the government continues to operate with stability. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly was reappointed in June, and a new cabinet was formed in July, with over half of its members being newly appointed ministers.

In relations with Japan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates Abdelatty, who joined the cabinet in July, visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting. During his visit, he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Kishida and handed over President El-Sisi's letter. Foreign Minister Abdelatty also held two meetings with Foreign Minister Kamikawa, in which they exchanged views on bilateral relations as well as regional and international affairs and confirmed close cooperation between the two countries. In September, the Japan-Egypt-Jordan Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the Middle East was held in New York, where the three ministers discussed the regional situation, including the situation in Gaza. Furthermore, in response to the tense situation in the Middle East, including the situations in Gaza and Lebanon, Foreign Minister Kamikawa held a telephone call with

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry on April 4, and Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdelatty on October 16.

Regarding relations with the League of Arab States, headquartered in Cairo, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit visited Japan in July and met with Foreign Minister Kamikawa to discuss cooperative relations between Japan and the League of Arab States. In addition, the 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum was held in Tokyo for the first time in 11 years. The event, co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the League of Arab States, featured a ministerial meeting with economic ministers from League member states and a public-private conference attended by representatives from private companies.

The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) stationed in the Sinai Peninsula, whose main mission is to supervise the implementation of the security provisions of the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace, continues to play an important role in maintaining the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel considering the destabilizing situation in the region, including the situation in Gaza. Japan provides financial support to the MFO, including funding contributions, and has dispatched Self-Defense Force personnel to the MFO since April 2019. Japan currently sends a total of four personnel, thereby continuing to contribute to peace and stability in the region.

## (2) Libya

Libya is an energy powerhouse boasting the greatest oil reserves in Africa. However, after the collapse of the Qadhafi regime in 2011, the country remains unstable with political powers competing between the east and the west of the country. In April 2019, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, commander of the eastern "Libyan National Army (LNA)," ordered an advance on Tripoli, leading to armed clashes. Since the two sides signed a permanent ceasefire agreement in October 2020, incidents of armed clashes between the eastern and western forces have significantly decreased, and the economy has been revitalizing. In September 2023, floods caused extensive damage, particularly in the eastern region of Derna, and countries including Japan provided emergency aid.



Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates of Egypt Abdelatty (August 23, Tokyo)

On the political front, a basic agreement was reached at the UN-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) to hold a series of national elections, including presidential elections, on December 24, 2021, but these have been postponed indefinitely and have yet to be held as of the end of 2024. In February 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya Abdoulaye Bathily, announced an initiative to hold elections within the year, and efforts led by the UN have continued to proceed. However, in April 2024, he resigned, citing the lack of prospects for peace, and his successor has yet to be named. Following the Japan-Libya Summit Video Conference Meeting at the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8) in August 2022, Japan reopened its embassy in Tripoli in January 2024 for the first time since it temporarily closed in July 2014, re-activating high-level exchanges of visits between the two countries. In January 2024, Vice President of the Presidential Council Abdullah Allafi visited Japan and met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and Foreign Minister Kamikawa, where they concurred to work to revitalize bilateral relations in the future. They also exchanged views on specific measures for cooperation in areas such as the economy, business, and human resource development. In April, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs FUKAZAWA Yoichi visited Libya, paid a courtesy call on Vice President Allafi and held a Japan-Libya policy talks with Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation El-Taher El-Baour. The visit was the first political-level visit from Japan to Libya in approximately 12 years. At the TICAD Ministerial Meeting held in August, Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs El-Baour held a Foreign Ministers' Meeting where they confirmed the importance of further developing Japan-Libya relations.

### **(3) Maghreb Countries (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco)**

The Maghreb region is of great economic importance in Africa due to its geographical advantage of being located at the junction of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and its great potential thanks to its abundant young labor force. On the other hand, the region continues to be faced with the challenge of how to

overcome increasing poverty, regional economic disparities, high unemployment rate, and the impact of soaring food prices. There are also concerns about the security implications of the flow of weapons and illegal immigrants from Libya and the Sahel region.

In Tunisia, a major cabinet reshuffle was carried out with the appointment of Prime Minister Kamel Madouri in August. A presidential election was held in October, and incumbent President Kais Saied was re-elected. Regarding the economy and finances, although there have been signs that tourism, a major industry, has been recovering since the summer of 2023, attention has been focused on whether the country will be able to proceed with structural reforms in the future to address challenges such as the trade deficit, fiscal deficit, high unemployment rate, and sluggish growth rate.

In relations with Japan, State Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad Mounir Ben Rjiba visited Japan in February and met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuge and others. They concurred to use opportunities such as Expo 2025 in Osaka, Kansai, Japan, to work toward further strengthening bilateral economic relations as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Furthermore, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Fukazawa visited Tunisia in May and paid a courtesy call on Minister of Foreign Affairs Nabil Ammar.

In Algeria, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune newly took office in December 2019. As part of economic reforms aimed at realizing “a New Algeria (l’Algérie nouvelle),” in 2022, he made amendments to the investment law among other changes. President Tebboune was re-elected in presidential elections held in September 2024. In his second term, with his administration’s foundations now stable, he is expected to focus on economic and social policies, stating that he aims to make Algeria “Africa’s second largest economy.” In relations with Japan, economic relations are expected to become stronger with the entry into force of a bilateral tax convention in January 2024 and an agreement to establish a joint economic committee in April. In July, CEO of SONATRACH (a national hydrocarbon company) Rachid Hachichi visited Japan to attend the Japan-Arab Economic Forum. In August,

Minister of Knowledge Economy, Startups and Microenterprises Yacine El-Mahdi Oualid visited Japan to attend the TICAD Ministerial Meeting. During their visits to Japan, they met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji and exchanged views with JICA and private companies. In addition to the oil and natural gas sector, where cooperation has been progressing to date, it is expected that economic relations between the two countries will be strengthened in a wide range of areas, including new fields such as renewable energy and startups. In 2024, Algeria served alongside Japan as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council as the only Arab country and conducted a vigorous exchange of views with Japan to cooperate through multilateral frameworks. Furthermore, bilateral relations are developing in a variety of other areas, including the Japan-Algeria Manga Contest held by the Embassy of Japan in Algeria at the Algiers International Comics Festival and the attendance of a JICA mission made up of JICA experts at the African Startup Conference.

In Morocco, the second Akhannouch cabinet was inaugurated following a cabinet reshuffle in October. Morocco has been facing serious water shortages in recent years, and King Mohammed VI emphasized the need for measures in a speech in July. Meanwhile, the country is accelerating the introduction of renewable energy and infrastructure development in preparation for the 2030 FIFA World Cup. In October, at the invitation of the King, French President Emmanuel Macron paid a state visit to Morocco and affirmed his intention to promote bilateral economic cooperation toward decarbonization and to build a value chain



Foreign Minister Kamikawa, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates Nasser Bourita signed the Memorandum of Cooperation and shake hands (May 31, Tokyo)

through infrastructure development and the establishment of a joint industrial hub in Morocco.

In relations with Japan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita visited Japan in May and held a foreign ministers' meeting and a working dinner with Foreign Minister Kamikawa and signed a "Memorandum of Cooperation for a Reinforced Partnership." In September, the two countries signed an exchange of notes for a yen loan for the "Development Policy Loan for Universal Health Coverage" (27.76 billion Japanese yen). Furthermore, Minister of Investment, Convergence and Evaluation of Public Policies Karim Zidane visited Japan in November and met with Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry MUTO Yoji, where they exchanged views toward deepening economic ties and signed a memorandum of cooperation with the aim of promoting investment and trade activities.



## COLUMN

## Cooperation between Japan and the League of Arab States

The League of Arab States is a regional international organization headquartered in Cairo, Egypt, with 22 Arab countries and regions as member states. The relationship between Japan and the League of Arab States has been steadily developing based on the establishment of a comprehensive mechanism for Japan-Arab cooperation built upon the Japan-Arab Economic Forum, the Japan-Arab Political Dialogue, and Japan-Arab Cultural and Educational Cooperation as a result of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Government of Japan and the League of Arab States signed by Foreign Minister Kishida in 2013. High-level visits between Japan and the League have also become more active, and Prime Minister Kishida became the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit the League of Arab States headquarters in April 2023.

#### ■ Japan-Arab Economic Forum

In July 2024, during the Japan-Arab Economic Forum, Japan invited Secretary General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit, as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and held the 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum in Tokyo. The Ministerial Conference was attended by Foreign Minister Kamikawa and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Saito from Japan, and 10 ministerial-level dignitaries, including the Secretary General on the Arab side. The Public-Private Business and Economic Conference was attended by several government officials and business people, including Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Saito, and Arab cabinet ministers. The Forum served as a networking platform to strengthen economic relations in various fields between Japan and the League of Arab States and its member states. In the face of new challenges such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tackling climate change, and responding to technological developments, Japan and Arab countries reaffirmed to become partners based on mutual trust toward realizing a sustainable, resilient, and developing economy and society through human resource development in the fields of energy and digital technology.

Foreign Minister Kamikawa also took the opportunity to exchange views with the Secretary General on cooperation between Japan and the League of Arab States, as well as on regional situations.

#### ■ Japan-Arab Political Dialogue

In September 2023, the third Japan-Arab Political Dialogue was held at the League of Arab States headquarters, where Japan and League member states discussed discovering opportunities for further political cooperation on issues of common concern and common interest in regional and international situations. Foreign Minister Hayashi co-chaired the meeting with Secretary General of the League of Arab States Aboul Gheit, where they adopted a joint statement, sharing with Arab countries the importance of a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

#### ■ Japan-Arab Cultural and Educational Cooperation

People-to-people exchanges are being promoted in a variety of ways. As part of Japan-Arab cultural and educational cooperation, Arabic language training attachés from MOFA visit the League of Arab States headquarters to attend lectures on the origins and purpose of the League, as well as its activities in various fields such as politics, economy, and human rights. In addition, the Embassy of Japan in Egypt gives lectures on Japan's diplomatic policy in the Arab region to junior officers of the League.



The 5th Japan-Arab Economic Forum Ministerial Conference (July 11, Iikura Guest House, MOFA, Tokyo)



Arabic language training attachés from MOFA visit the League of Arab States headquarters (June 11, Cairo, Egypt)

### ■ Cooperation with the League of Arab States Organizations

There are 14 Arab organizations under the umbrella of the League of Arab States, covering a wide range of fields, and Japan also cooperates with these organizations for the development of the League member states. For example, Japan has provided a training vessel to the Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport in Alexandria, Egypt, and has supported the training of Djibouti's coast guard officers at the Academy. Japan also participated in the Arab Society for Intellectual Property Conference hosted by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation in Cairo, where it shared Japanese knowledge and discussed policies for protecting intellectual property.