

Section 7 The Middle East and North Africa

1 Overview

The Middle East and North Africa (hereinafter “the Middle East”) is located at 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, as the diversification of economy and decarbonization are being advanced, 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 cease-fire and the release of hostages. Diplomatic efforts have also been made at the United Nations (UN) for adopting multiple cease-fire 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, until 2024, as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and then, in close cooperation with the countries concerned in order to improve the humanitarian situation and de-escalate the situation as soon as possible.

In 2025, tensions in the Middle East region intensified. In particular, in June, Israel carried out large-scale military strikes against Iranian nuclear-related facilities and other targets, and Iran in turn launched missile and drone attacks against Israel in retaliation, resulting in a continued exchange of attacks between

Israel and Iran, and rising tensions throughout the region rapidly. Foreign Minister Iwaya continued diplomatic efforts toward regional stabilization, including by expressing grave concern over the exchange of attacks and the severe damage caused, and by calling on both sides to avoid any further escalation of the situation, in telephone calls with Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi of Iran and Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar of Israel, among others. Subsequently, the U.S. carried out strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, and on the 24th, the U.S. announced a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Iran. The Government of Japan welcomed the announcement of this ceasefire agreement and expressed its expectation for the steady and faithful implementation of the agreement.

With regard to the situation in Gaza, although a ceasefire agreement entered into force in January 2025, attacks by Israel resumed in March. In October, progress was made, including the realization of a ceasefire and the release of hostages, as an agreement was reached between the parties based on the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict put forward by President Trump of the U.S. Foreign Minister Iwaya welcomed the conclusion of the agreement under the leadership of President Trump and expressed Japan's respect for the tireless efforts of mediating countries such as the U.S., Qatar, Egypt, and Türkiye. Furthermore, a statement was released urging all parties concerned to implement the agreement and to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, with a view to improving the humanitarian situation and realizing a two-state solution.

With regard to Iran's nuclear issue, citing Iran's significant non-performance of its commitments under

the 2015 nuclear agreement (JCPOA),⁽¹⁾ the so-called “snapback” was triggered at the UN Security Council in September, resulting in the reimposition of sanctions against Iran. In connection, in the same month, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Foreign Minister Araghchi of Iran and called for the early resumption of talks between the U.S. and Iran on the nuclear issue and the immediate resumption of full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In December, Foreign Minister Motegi held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Araghchi and emphasized once again the importance of continuing diplomatic efforts toward the resolution of Iran's nuclear issue through dialogue.

In the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, attacks by the Houthis (an armed group in Yemen) on commercial vessels severely disrupted international supply chains. Japan has played a role in ensuring the rights and freedom of navigation, working in close coordination with the international community.

In the West Bank, restrictions on economic activity and people's movement have exacerbated already poor socio-economic conditions, while Israel's continuing settlement activities and settler violence have expanded, creating friction between settlers and residents. In Syria, the administration established under President Ahmad al-Sharaa has been advancing dialogue toward

an inclusive political settlement and national reconciliation, while sporadic clashes between various religious and tribal communities within the country continue to occur. Furthermore, Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights continues. In Afghanistan, there are continued concerns about the deteriorating and serious humanitarian situation, including damage caused by earthquakes that struck in September and November.

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. Through opportunities such as high-level visits to Japan from various countries on the occasion of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, the Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9) held in August, and summit-level and foreign-minister-level meetings held on the occasion of the Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)⁽²⁾ Foreign Ministers' Meeting in September, Japan strengthened bilateral relations with individual countries and exchanged views on the increasingly tense situation in the Middle East.

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. in 2021, 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 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers as well as civilians, including foreign nationals. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed and more than 5,500 wounded. In addition,

(1) JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action): A plan that imposes constraints on Iran's nuclear activities while ensuring they remain peaceful, and that sets out in detail the procedures for lifting previously imposed sanctions.

(2) GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council. 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, such as defense and the economy.

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 2025, more than 71,266 people had been killed and more than 171,222 injured in the Gaza Strip, and approximately 1.9 million Gaza residents had been displaced.

As the fighting dragged on, the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar played leading roles in mediation efforts to reach a cease-fire and hostage release agreement between Israel and Hamas. In this context, in January 2025, an agreement on the release of hostages and a ceasefire was reached between the parties. Following the agreement, some hostages were released and humanitarian assistance was expanded; however, from March onward, Israeli forces resumed military operations, which further expanded to cover the entire Gaza Strip. Following the announcement by U.S. President Trump of his “Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict” at the end of September, an agreement on a ceasefire and hostage release was reached between Israel and Hamas in October. In November, UN Security Council resolution 2803, which endorsed the “Comprehensive Plan” and called on all parties to implement it, was adopted. International efforts are underway toward the stabilization, recovery, and reconstruction of Gaza.

In the West Bank, a severe situation continues, including the expansion of Israeli settlements and a sharp increase in acts of violence by settlers, the conduct of security operations by Israel, deterioration of the socioeconomic situation due to movement restrictions, and financial difficulties facing the Palestinian Authority.

As a notable development in the Middle East peace process, continuing from 2024, the number of countries recognizing a Palestinian state increased in 2025 as well, mainly among European nations. French President Emmanuel Macron, working in cooperation with Saudi Arabia, convened the “High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestinian and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution,” leading the movement toward recognition of a Palestinian state. Countries

including France, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and Australia recognized a Palestinian state.

B The Government of Japan's Efforts

In its efforts to realize a two-state solution where Israel and Palestine can coexist peacefully, Japan, in coordination with the international community, has actively contributed through the three pillars: political dialogue with stakeholders, confidence building among parties concerned, and assistance to the Palestinians.

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 2025, 18 Palestinian private enterprises are operating at the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP) project, the initiative's flagship project creating approximately 285 jobs. In addition, Japan is mobilizing 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). On July 11, in order to discuss the assistance needs arising from the situation in Gaza, Foreign Minister Iwaya co-chaired the fourth ministerial meeting of CEAPAD in Malaysia, together with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan, and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Palestine Estephan Salameh, and the Co-Chairs' Joint Statement and the Action Plan were adopted as the outcomes. In November, a working-level online meeting was held as a follow-up to the ministerial meeting, at which the formal membership of the Philippines was welcomed. Since October 2023, Japan has provided humanitarian and recovery assistance totaling approximately 410 million U.S. dollars to the Palestinians.

Since October 7, 2023, Japan has consistently and unequivocally condemned the terror attacks by Hamas and others, and called on all parties concerned to achieve a cease-fire and the release of hostages, comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, improve the humanitarian situation, and calm the situation at the earliest opportunity. Japan has also made proactive diplomatic efforts by vigorously

Special Feature

Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD)

On July 11, Japan co-hosted with Malaysia and Palestine the fourth ministerial meeting of the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD)¹ in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. CEAPAD is a regional cooperation framework launched by Japan in 2013 as one of Japan's unique initiatives to support Palestinian state-building efforts by drawing on resources, knowledge, and experiences of economic development of East Asian countries.

In the wake of the terror attacks carried out by Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups on October 7, 2023, the situation in Gaza deteriorated rapidly. Recognizing that the humanitarian assistance needs of the people of Gaza, who find themselves in a critical humanitarian situation, as well as the enormous early-recovery and reconstruction needs, are challenges that can only be addressed through the concerted efforts of the entire international community, Japan has worked to revitalize this framework and has played a role as a regional leader. Japan held multiple working-level online meetings, receiving briefings from the Palestinian Authority (PA) and international organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), on the situation on the ground, assistance needs, and plans for recovery and reconstruction, while engaging in repeated discussions that also encompassed medium- to long-term challenges such as PA reforms and fiscal issues. Subsequently, following the agreement reached at the Japan-Malaysia Summit Meeting in January to advance cooperation on assistance to Palestine, and with the cooperation of Malaysia, it was decided to hold the ministerial meeting.

The fourth ministerial meeting, convened in this manner, was attended by a record-high 10 ministerial-level participants from 13 countries and regions and two international organizations, including the co-chairs: Foreign Minister Iwaya, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan, and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Palestine Estephan Anton Salameh. Each participating country expressed its intention for future support to Palestine based on its respective strengths, and the participants confirmed that they would continue to strengthen coordination and promote cooperation through CEAPAD in areas including humanitarian aid, recovery and reconstruction assistance, and PA reforms support. As results of the meeting, in addition to a Co-Chairs' Joint Statement, the participants adopted the CEAPAD IV Kuala Lumpur Action Plan, which outlines the needs of Palestine and the areas of assistance where each participant can leverage their strengths, and which will serve as a guide for future assistance within the CEAPAD framework.

In October, a ceasefire and hostage release agreement between the parties was reached in Gaza based on United States President Donald J. Trump's "Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict," and the international community began in earnest to move toward the reconstruction of Gaza. In light of these developments, in November, a working-level online meeting of CEAPAD was held, at which participants confirmed that countries would continue to collaborate and cooperate in support of humanitarian assistance to Gaza, early recovery and reconstruction support for Gaza, Palestine's economic development, and state-building and PA reforms, and that they would actively engage in regional and international initiatives concerning the implementation of a two-state solution through the CEAPAD framework.

As part of efforts toward the implementation of the "Comprehensive Plan" and a future "two-state solution," Japan will continue to work to expand the circle of support for Palestine through CEAPAD and to strengthen coordination.



Foreign Minister Iwaya serving as co-chair at the fourth Ministerial Meeting of CEAPAD (left) and a scene from the meeting (right) (July 11, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

¹ CEAPAD: The circle of cooperation within CEAPAD is expanding: Laos and Cambodia became official members in 2024, and the Philippines in 2025, while Timor-Leste participated for the first time as an observer at the fourth Ministerial Meeting. As of the end of December 2025, membership stands at 11 countries and regions and three international organizations.

holding meetings and telephone calls with counterparts from concerned countries and regions at leaders' and foreign-ministers' levels. When agreements were reached between the parties in January and October 2025, Foreign Minister Iwaya released statements welcoming the conclusion of the agreements and calling for their sincere and steady implementation. On the occasion of the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2803, Foreign Minister Motegi released a statement welcoming the adoption of the resolution.

Furthermore, in November, Foreign Minister Motegi newly appointed OKUBO Takeshi as Ambassador in charge of Gaza Rebuilding Assistance, in order to address matters including support for Palestinian state-building centered on Gaza reconstruction and human contributions to the provisional governance mechanism for Gaza.

(2) Israel

The current government was formed in December 2022 as a coalition led by Prime Minister Benjamin 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. In relations with Japan, numerous high-level and candid exchanges took place. In May, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sa'ar of Israel, visited Japan, the first visit by an Israeli foreign minister in 15 years, to attend the National Day ceremony of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya. In August, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs MATSUMOTO Hisashi visited Israel and held meetings with Foreign Minister Sa'ar and Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Iwaya held three foreign ministers' telephone talks following the foreign ministers' meeting in May. In January 2026, Foreign Minister Motegi visited Israel, where he held talks with Foreign Minister Sa'ar and paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog. Foreign Minister Motegi urged Israel to take appropriate measures regarding the robust implementation of the "Comprehensive Plan," the protection of civilians and ensuring the humanitarian assistance in Gaza. He also conveyed that settlement activities in the West Bank are in violation of

international law, that Japan is seriously concerned that the expansion of settlements and the increase in settler violence are further destabilizing the regional situation, and that Japan attaches great importance to a two-state solution.

(3) Palestine

Based on the 1993 Oslo Accords and other agreements, the Palestinian Authority (PA) began self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from 1995. Prime Minister Mahmoud 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 PA. In 2022, through Algerian mediation, the Algiers Declaration, a reconciliation document between Palestinian factions, was signed. In July 2024, representatives of 14 Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, gathered in Beijing, China for reconciliation talks and issued the Beijing Declaration. However, a state of division between the West Bank and Gaza continues to persist.

Regarding Japan-Palestine relations, in June, Palestinian Minister of National Economy Mohammed Al-Amour visited Japan to participate in the National Day ceremony of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya. In August, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto visited Palestine and held meetings with President Abbas and others. In January 2026, Foreign Minister Motegi visited Palestine, where he held talks with Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa and paid a courtesy call on Vice President Hussein al-Sheikh. Foreign Minister Motegi explained Japan's consistent support for a two-state solution and Japan's position on support for Gaza reconstruction and Palestinian state-building, and expressed Japan's deep concern over the deteriorating situation in the West Bank and expectations for steady progress in PA reforms. The two sides concurred on launching the "Japan-Palestine High-Level Political Dialogue" in order to continue cooperating for peace and stability in the Middle East region.

(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.

In Afghanistan, 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 so-called “vice and virtue law,” based on their own interpretation of Islam, which severely restricts the conduct of the people, continues to be applied, and the international community has expressed serious concerns.

Also, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported that production of poppy, a raw material for narcotic 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 in October, a large-scale armed clash occurred near the border with Pakistan, resulting in casualties, which has become one of the factors destabilizing the regional situation. Against this backdrop, Japan continues direct engagement with the Taliban and calls 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. Japan has also actively contributed to discussions on the international stage.

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 September, an earthquake struck eastern Afghanistan, causing large-scale damage including the deaths of more than 2,000 people. In response, Japan released a statement by Foreign Minister Iwaya and provided emergency relief goods through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), as well as an Emergency Grant through international organizations in the fields of food, health and medical care, and water and sanitation. In November, another earthquake struck northern Afghanistan, prompting Japan to release a message of condolence from Foreign Minister Motegi and provide emergency relief goods through JICA.

(5) Iran

Iran is a major Shiite regional power with a population of approximately 92 million that boasts abundant natural resources. Japan has developed a traditionally friendly relationship with Iran for more than 90 years.

On June 13, Israel carried out attacks against Iranian nuclear-related facilities and other targets, and on June 21, the U.S. announced that it carried out strikes on three nuclear-related facilities in Iran: Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan.

Japan has consistently expressed serious concern over Iran's nuclear issue based on the position that Iran's development of nuclear weapons must never be allowed for the sake of maintaining the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and has been making diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue in coordination with the U.S. and others. From this perspective, in the context of the exchange of attacks between Israel and Iran, Japan expressed through statements by the Foreign Minister and other means its strong hope that the path to dialogue would be reopened by efforts toward a resolution of Iran's nuclear issue through dialogue, and urged both Iran and Israel to exercise maximum restraint. Japan also provided support for the evacuation of Japanese nationals in Iran by land routes, from the perspective of protecting its nationals residing in Iran.

Regarding the nuclear issue, following the U.S.'s withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)) in 2018, Iran has taken countermeasures to gradually suspend

its commitments under the nuclear agreement since July 2019. The Pezeshkian administration, which took office in 2024, has shown eagerness to engage in dialogue with Europe and the U.S., and indirect talks between the U.S. and Iran were held multiple times from April 2025 onward. However, these talks were subsequently suspended due to the impact of the attacks on Iran's nuclear-related facilities by Israel and the U.S. in June. Furthermore, in July, Iran announced the enforcement of the law to suspend cooperation with the IAEA, and as of the end of 2025, inspections of nuclear facilities affected by the attacks had not resumed. In August, UK, France, and Germany — participants in the JCPOA — notified the UNSC of Iran's "significant non-performance" of the JCPOA pursuant to UNSC Resolution 2231 of 2015, resulting in the reimposition in September of the sanctions against Iran that had been lifted under that resolution.

Japan has consistently maintained its position that Iran's development of nuclear weapons must never be allowed. Japan also considers that the ultimate resolution of Iran's nuclear issue can only be achieved through dialogue, and that, to this end, in addition to reaching agreement through consultations between Iran and the relevant countries, the continued involvement of the IAEA is essential. From this perspective, Japan has emphasized the importance of the early resumption of talks between the U.S. and Iran, and strongly urges Iran to properly implement the re-applied UNSC resolutions and, in accordance with its obligations under the relevant safeguards agreements, to immediately resume full cooperation with the IAEA. Furthermore, regarding the reimposition of UNSC sanctions against Iran, Japan duly implemented its domestic measures based on the relevant UNSC resolutions without delay in September.

Japan is an ally of the U.S. while also maintaining good relations with Iran for many years. In May, the Japan-Iran Vice-Ministerial Consultation was held. In response to Israel's attacks against Iran in June, two telephone calls were held between Foreign Minister Iwaya and Foreign Minister Araghchi of Iran in the same month. In September, Foreign Minister Iwaya held an in-person meeting with Foreign Minister Araghchi for the first time while visiting New York, U.S.

Furthermore, in December, Foreign Minister Motegi held a telephone call with Foreign Minister Araghchi,



Japan-Iran Foreign Ministers' Meeting (September 23, New York, U.S.)

and the two ministers concurred on continuing close dialogue between Japan and Iran at various levels toward peace and stability in the region. In this way, 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 multilayered dialogues with Iran at various levels.

In February 2026, U.S.-Iran talks resumed, however, on February 28, Israel and the U.S. carried out attacks against Iran, resulting in the deaths of Iranian leaders including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and senior commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, among others. Iran subsequently launched retaliatory strikes against Israel and neighboring countries. In response, Japan has been working in close coordination with relevant countries to gather information, and continues to make every effort to ensure the safety of Japanese nationals throughout the region, including in countries neighboring Iran, and to monitor the situation of maritime and air traffic and provide information to relevant parties. Furthermore, based on Japan's consistent position that Iran's development of nuclear weapons must never be allowed, Japan has communicated externally its strong call on Iran to cease actions that destabilize the region, including attacks on neighboring countries, and to pursue a diplomatic resolution. Japan's position is clearly set out in the Foreign Minister's statement of March 1. Japan also condemns Iran's actions, given that Iran's attacks have extended to civilian facilities, including energy facilities in neighboring countries, as well as diplomatic facilities, resulting in civilian casualties; that Iran has made reference to the closure of the

Strait of Hormuz; and that civilian vessels have in fact been attacked in the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding waters. Immediately after the outbreak of the situation, Foreign Minister Motegi held meetings with relevant countries, including Gulf countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan, conveying Japan's aforementioned position and requesting cooperation in ensuring the safety of Japanese nationals and confirmed that they would maintain close communication in response to the situation and work together in a coordinated manner. Foreign Minister Motegi also clearly conveyed Japan's position to the parties concerned, including Israel and Iran, requested their cooperation in ensuring the safety of Japanese nationals, and urged them to seek an early calming of the situation, expressing Japan's strong hope for this outcome.

The peace and stability of the Middle East region, including energy security, and maintaining the international nuclear non-proliferation regime are of utmost importance to Japan. Japan will continue to make all necessary diplomatic efforts, in coordination with the international community, to bring about an early settlement of the situation.

(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.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has exerted strong leadership for more than 20 years since becoming Prime Minister in 2003 and President in 2014, driving Türkiye's growth to a significant degree. 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 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 South and Central America and Africa. Regarding the situation in Gaza, Türkiye has proactively provided humanitarian assistance to Gaza residents from the outset, and on the occasion of the conclusion of the Gaza cease-fire agreement mediated by U.S. President Trump in October, Türkiye contributed to the conclusion of the agreement, making use of its unique position of having channels of communication with Hamas.

In terms of Japan-Türkiye relations, in February, Turkish Grand National Assembly Speaker Numan Kurtulmuş visited Japan at the invitation of the House of Representatives, and in April, Minister of Trade Ömer Bolat visited Japan to participate in the National Day event of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. In August, Minister of Defense NAKATANI Gen visited Türkiye, among other exchanges, realizing active high-level visits continuing from the previous year.

Furthermore, as was the case during the Great East Japan Earthquake and the major earthquake in southeastern Türkiye in 2023, both countries, being earthquake-prone nations, support each other by leveraging their respective strengths and experiences. From the perspective of sharing knowledge on disaster preparedness, both countries have also undertaken efforts such as holding the Japan-Türkiye Disaster Preparedness Seminar.

(7) Iraq

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

On the domestic political front, a state of confusion continued and a cabinet was unable to be formed for a while after the election for the Iraqi Council of Representatives in 2021. However, since the Al-Sudani administration was formed in October 2022, stable governance has been maintained and domestic security has improved. In October 2024, the 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. Furthermore, in November 2025, the election for the Iraqi Council of Representatives was held in a generally peaceful manner, and thus, Japan released a statement by the Press Secretary (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) welcoming this development. Meanwhile, the recent situations in neighboring countries, including the Israel and Palestine, Iran, and Syria, continue to affect the domestic situations in Iraq.

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.

(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, and is highly regarded internationally as an “anchor of peace and stability.” Jordan and Japan have longstanding friendly ties, and their bilateral relationship 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. In 2025, at the foreign ministerial level, Foreign Minister

Iwaya held meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi in February and May, and confirmed bilateral cooperation in addressing the Gaza humanitarian crisis toward the realization of a two-state solution and the establishment of long-term peace and stability in the region.

In May, Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II visited Japan on the occasion of the National Day of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, which served as an opportunity symbolizing the excellent relations between the two countries. Furthermore, Prime Minister Takaichi held a summit meeting with King Abdullah II, who visited Japan in November, and the two sides concurred on further strengthening cooperation in the fields of security and the economy under the strategic partnership and deepening bilateral relations going forward. In terms of security, high-level exchanges were actively conducted, including the visits to Jordan by Defense Minister Nakatani in August, General Uchikura Chief of Staff, Japan Joint Staff, in November, and Commander of the Ground Component Command Kobayashi in December, and the cooperative relationship between the two countries in the field of defense has become even closer.

(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. Furthermore, the negotiations for the Japan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which had been suspended since 2009, the have resumed and discussions continue to be advanced.

Saudi Arabia plays a leading role in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and is



Japan-Jordan Leaders' Working Dinner (November 11, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

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. Amid continued tensions in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia continues to play an important role in stabilizing the region. Furthermore, under "Saudi Vision 2030," the country is promoting new initiatives in various fields with the aim of comprehensive socioeconomic reforms. In 2025, Japan and Saudi Arabia marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, and various commemorative events were held. At the closing ceremony of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, a handover ceremony was held to Saudi Arabia, which will host the Expo 2030 Riyadh. In February, Minister of Foreign Affairs Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud visited Japan and held the Second Japan-Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Foreign Minister Iwaya. In April, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Saudi Arabia and held talks with Foreign Minister Faisal, and in September, a telephone call was also held between these two foreign ministers. In this way, active high-level visits and meetings were held between Japan and Saudi Arabia, and the two sides confirmed the strengthening of their strategic partnership and further advancing cooperation in various fields under the framework of Japan-Saudi Vision 2030, as well as coordination 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. Under the framework of the Japan-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Initiative (CSPI), Japan is further promoting cooperation in diverse fields. In April, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Sultan Al Jaber visited Japan, paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Ishiba and Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa, and held the Second Ministerial Level Meeting of the CSPI with Foreign Minister Iwaya. Furthermore, in December, Foreign Minister Motegi held talks with Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Jaber, who was visiting Japan, and the two sides concurred on further strengthening coordination between the two countries.



Meeting between Foreign Minister Motegi and Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Special Envoy to Japan Sultan Al Jaber of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (December 17, Tokyo)

Furthermore, Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan saw a number of high-level visits from ruling families and cabinet ministers, including Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

In the economic field, the launch of negotiations for the Japan-UAE Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) was announced at the summit level in September 2024, and the negotiations have been advancing vigorously. Following the third round of negotiations in Tokyo in June, the fourth and fifth rounds via online format in August and November respectively, the sixth round was held in Dubai in December, and the seventh round was held in Tokyo in January 2026.

In terms of culture, the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) took place for the first time in the UAE in December. To promote people-to-people exchanges, in June, the period of stay without a visa was extended from 30 days to 90 days for holders of ordinary passports from the UAE.

Qatar is one of the world's largest natural gas producers and has been further raising its international profile by continuously mediating negotiations, leveraging its unique channels of communication with Iran, the Taliban, Hamas, and others, including the peace negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban, the negotiations over the exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran, and the negotiations for the cease-fire and the release of hostages between Israel and Hamas.

In September, Israel carried out an attack targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar, heightening regional tensions. Japan released a statement by the Foreign Minister



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Miyaji attending the 8th Indian Ocean Conference 2025 (February 17, Muscat, Oman)

strongly condemning this attack as it threatens Qatar's sovereignty and security and, consequently, jeopardizes regional stability, and expressing solidarity with Qatar.

With Qatar, through high-level dialogues, including a meeting in September between Foreign Minister Iwaya and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, as well as the Third Japan-Qatar Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue held with Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani during Foreign Minister Motegi's visit to Qatar in January 2026, the two countries confirmed the further promotion of their cooperative relationship in a wide range of fields based on their Strategic Partnership.

Oman has continued to mediate, leveraging its unique channels with Iran and the Houthis, including negotiations for the normalization of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, and negotiations and indirect consultations for the exchange of detainees between the U.S. and Iran. In February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma spoke at the Indian Ocean Conference held in the capital city of Muscat. The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) made a port call in Oman and conducted an exercise. As a result, cooperation and exchanges between the two countries progressed across a wide range of fields, including maritime security. In April, the 8th Japan-Oman Foreign Policy Dialogues were held, and in September, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who was visiting Kuwait to attend the Japan-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting and other events, held talks with Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, among other instances of close high-level dialogue.

Kuwait is a strong partner with Japan, supplying approximately 6.8% of its crude oil imports, and in 2025, active high-level visits were carried out.

In May, Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visited Japan and held meetings with Prime Minister Ishiba and others, on which occasion the bilateral relationship was elevated to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" and further strengthened. Crown Prince Al-Sabah also visited Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

In August, the Fifth Japan-Kuwait Foreign Ministry Policy Consultations were held, where active discussions were exchanged on bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas including politics, the economy, energy, and culture, on the strengthening of exchanges between the two countries, and on cooperation in the international arena. Furthermore, from late August to early September, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Kuwait to attend the Second Japan-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, held a Japan-Kuwait Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and exchanged views on cooperation in various fields.

In addition, in September, Prime Minister Ishiba, who was visiting New York, U.S. to attend the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly, held a meeting with Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and reaffirmed the close relationship between the two countries.

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.

In September 2025, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who was visiting Kuwait to attend the Japan-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting and other events, held an informal meeting with Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani. In the same month, Foreign Minister Zayani visited Japan, paid a courtesy call on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi, and held the First Japan-Bahrain Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Foreign Minister Iwaya, reaffirming the close bilateral relationship in a wide range of areas beyond energy, including politics and security, the environment, information and communications technology, and space.

Also in the same month, Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa visited Japan to attend Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and held meetings with Prime Minister Ishiba and Foreign Minister Iwaya respectively. The two sides concurred on elevating the bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership, and confirmed expanding cooperation in diverse fields between the two countries.

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. Japan has been providing assistance to Yemen, which has been described as "one of the world's worst humanitarian crises" due to the protracted conflict, in coordination with international organizations and others since 2015.

In Yemen, clashes continued between the internationally recognized Government of Yemen and Arab Coalition forces on one hand, and the Houthis on the other, but a nationwide cease-fire was agreed in April 2022, and the lull has continued even after that cease-fire expired in October of the same year.

Meanwhile, in response to the situation in Gaza, in November 2023, the Houthis began launching missile and drone attacks against Israel as well as attacks on vessels navigating the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Japan has resolutely condemned the actions of the Houthis, called for restraint from acts that obstruct the free and safe navigation of vessels, and has been working in coordination with relevant countries toward the early release of relevant vessels and crew members and the stabilization of the surrounding waters. In January 2025, the crew members of the MV Galaxy Leader, a vessel

operated by a Japanese company that had been detained by the Houthis since November 2023, were released.

Following the conclusion of the Gaza cease-fire agreement in October 2025, the Houthis ceased their attacks on vessels navigating the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. However, concerns about the safety of navigation continue, posing obstacles to smooth logistics and energy supply. The Yemen Maritime Security Partnership (YMSP), which was launched in September, is an international framework aimed at enhancing the capacity of Yemen's Coast Guard toward the restoration of stability in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and Japan has participated in this framework.

(10) Syria

A Developments in the Situation

After a prolonged crisis that began in 2011, as Israeli attacks on Hezbollah, the pro-Iranian militia group in Lebanon, expanded from September 2024 onward, attacks within Syria also increased, and the situation in Syria under the Assad regime continued to deteriorate.

Against this backdrop, anti-government forces centered on Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) announced that they had seized the northern city of Aleppo at the end of November 2024, and seized the capital, Damascus, on December 8. When President Bashar al-Assad fled into exile in Russia, the establishment of a "transitional administration" was declared in Damascus on the 10th. Türkiye, Arab countries, and Western nations welcomed the establishment of the transitional administration and began engaging with it in succession.

After President Al-Sharaa was appointed at the end of February 2025, the transitional administration advanced the political process domestically, including by holding a national dialogue at the end of February, promulgating a constitutional declaration in March, and establishing a transitional government with a five-year term and appointing cabinet ministers at the end of that month. Furthermore, in October, People's Assembly elections were held with the aim of re-establishing a legislative body. On the diplomatic front, Syria has been pursuing active diplomacy toward rejoining the international community and rebuilding its economy. President Al-Sharaa addressed the UN General Assembly in September — the first time a Syrian head of state had done so in 58 years — and in November,



Meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and Crown Prince and Prime Minister HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain (September 19, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

he became the first Syrian head of state since Syria's independence in 1946 to visit the White House, where he held talks with President Trump.

In terms of security, in June, a suicide bombing by ISIL occurred at a church in Damascus, and conflicts with domestic minority communities have continued, including a large-scale clash between Alawites and government forces in the coastal area in March, as well as a large-scale battle in July when Syrian government forces and Israeli forces intervened in a clash between Bedouin tribal groups and Druze. In the northeast, exchanges of fire with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continue, but the Syrian government has indicated its stance of continuing consultations aimed at integrating the SDF into the government forces.

The humanitarian situation continues to be severe, and in 2025, the scale of people in need of humanitarian assistance is estimated at 16.5 million, representing 67% of the population. While internally and externally displaced persons have been voluntarily returning to their places of origin since the collapse of the former regime, the social and economic infrastructure has been destroyed by the Syria crisis that has continued for more than 10 years, and the need for assistance remains high in terms of facilitating the acceptance of returnees.

B The Government of Japan's Efforts

Japan appreciates the efforts of the Syrian transitional government, established in March, to engage in dialogue toward an inclusive political settlement and national reconciliation on various domestic issues. Japan calls on all parties to play a constructive role so that a peaceful and stable transition is realized in Syria, and will support a peaceful and stable transition by the Syrian government and people in coordination with the international community.

In line with this policy, at the end of May, Japan announced the partial lifting of measures such as asset freezes that had been imposed on the former Assad regime. In addition, Japan has provided more than 3.5 billion U.S. dollars in humanitarian assistance to Syria and neighboring countries since 2012, and based on the view that it is necessary to improve the lives of the Syrian people who have been worn down by years of crisis, Japan will continue to provide support for reconstruction and improvement of the humanitarian

situation, leveraging Japan's unique knowledge and experience in areas such as human resource development, mine clearance, and infrastructure development.

(11) Lebanon

In Lebanon, a presidential vacancy had continued following the end of former President Michel Aoun's term at the end of October 2022, due to conflicts among political forces and other reasons. Administrative and financial reforms have also been significantly delayed, with problems including the dysfunction of public services and high inflation. Affected by the deteriorating situation in Gaza from October 2023 onward, exchanges of fire erupted between the Israeli military and Hezbollah in the south, which borders Israel, and displaced persons numbering approximately one million were generated within the country. On November 26, 2024, Israel and Lebanon agreed to a cease-fire. Japan welcomed this agreement and has called on all parties to fully implement the cease-fire agreement; however, Israeli military air strikes have continued mainly in southern Lebanon even now, and the situation remains unstable.

In January 2025, Joseph Aoun, Commander of the Army, was newly elected as the 14th President of Lebanon, resolving the presidential vacancy that had lasted for more than two years. In February, the Salam cabinet was inaugurated, marking a step toward stability and development for the country. In early August, the cabinet adopted a policy of limiting the possession of weapons to official security agencies and military organizations, and a policy of ending the presence of non-governmental armed forces throughout Lebanon. Furthermore, in late August, a UN Security Council resolution was adopted providing for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to have its operational mandate extended to the end of 2026, after which a reduction and withdrawal of forces would proceed. In accordance with these policies, it will be necessary going forward to advance the strengthening of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the disarmament of domestic forces, including Hezbollah, in a stable and parallel manner.

Japan has provided support to Lebanon totaling approximately 290 million U.S. dollars since 2012, and will continue to provide support toward the improvement of the humanitarian situation.

Column

70 Years of Bonds, a Future Woven at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan — The 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Saudi Arabia —



On September 23, Saudi Arabia's National Day was celebrated at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. It had a special meaning as it coincided with both the 95th anniversary of the founding of Saudi Arabia and the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Saudi Arabia. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have been important partners in the field of energy. Furthermore, recently in Saudi Arabia, interest in Japan has particularly been growing, driven by anime, manga, games, and other such cultural products. At the venue where the National Day event took place, the spotlight was placed on cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, and the harmony woven by the performances on stage served as a highlight of the friendship and trust that the two countries have built over 70 years.

At 2:00 p.m., with the national flags of Japan and Saudi Arabia raised and the national anthems of both countries performed, the National Day event opened. Following remarks by Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih, Minister of Investment, expressing hopes for deepening relations toward the next generation and his respect for Japanese culture, a rhythmic performance of the Alardah — Saudi Arabia's UNESCO-listed intangible cultural heritage sword dance — and drumming was presented; this was followed by a performance weaving beautiful melodies on the Japanese flute (*nohkan*) and the traditional Saudi Arabian reed flute (*ney*). The moment when the cultures of both countries resonated together on a single stage captivated many spectators.

In the projection mapping work "Tales of Water," a Japanese cellist and a Saudi Arabian singer performed together, bringing to life the story of a pearl diver of the Arabian Gulf coast. The rich timbre of the cello, the singer's soaring voice, and vivid visuals merged into one. "Tales of Water" reminded audiences anew that, even between countries with different histories and ways of life, there are many things in common within nature and the rhythms of daily existence.

At the concert after sunset, Japanese popular singer LiSA and a young Saudi Arabian artist performed together, and the voices united in song became a symbol of exchanges that transcend culture and generations.

The bilateral cultural harmony at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan left a deep impression on many people's hearts, and in particular "Tales of Water" was highly acclaimed for its artistry and immersive experience — including winning the Silver Award in the "Presentation" category of the World Expolympics at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

Furthermore, the commemorative cultural event marking the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Saudi Arabia, held at Tokyo Midtown Hibiya in December, drew many Japanese visitors who had traveled from all over Japan.

Saudi Arabia was originally established as a unified state in 1932. Now, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the National Day at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan reflected Saudi Arabia as it is today and made a major contribution to promoting mutual understanding and exchanges with the country. By a further remarkable coincidence, it has been decided that the 2030 World Exposition will be held in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, as if receiving the baton from Japan. It is hoped that this connection will serve as an opportunity for many Japanese people to visit Expo 2030 Riyadh, thereby further deepening mutual understanding between Japan and Saudi Arabia and leading to the promotion of exchanges for the next generation.



National Day Official Ceremony — Cultural Performance: Saudi Tarouk (September 23, Osaka; Photo: Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition ©Expo 2025)



National Day Official Ceremony — Cultural Performance: Saudi Traditional Dance, the Alardah (September 23, Osaka; Photo: Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition ©Expo 2025)

3 The Situation in North Africa

(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 114.5 million. Under the stable governance of President Abdul Fattah El-Sisi, elections for the upper house were held in August and for the lower house in November. Affected by the deteriorating situation in Gaza from October 2023 onward, the decrease in revenue from Suez Canal transit fees and tourism-related income has had a significant impact on the Egyptian economy; however, real economic growth has remained positive due to economic reforms pursued by the Egyptian government, including the liberalization of foreign exchange.

In terms of high-level visits between the two countries, Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade Hassan El-Khatib attended the National Day of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan in July. In August, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly visited Japan for the first time to attend TICAD 9, and at his meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, the two sides exchanged views on bilateral relations and regional and international affairs and confirmed close coordination. In addition, ministerial-level visits to Japan continued, including by the Minister of Education and Technical Education and the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities. In addition, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology ABE Toshiko visited Egypt in May, and in November, the official opening ceremony of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) — which Japan has supported through construction and operation, artifact restoration and exhibition, and other means — was held with great fanfare, attended by guests from 79 countries and organizations. State Minister for Foreign Affairs KUNIMITSU Ayano attended on behalf of the Government of Japan as Special Envoy of Prime Minister Takaichi.

Regarding the situation in Gaza, Egypt has continued to lead and coordinate humanitarian assistance and mediation efforts between Israel and Hamas, and has played an important role in regional stability by leading discussions toward de-escalation of the situation. On

October 9, mediation efforts involving Egypt, the U.S., Qatar, and Türkiye bore fruit, resulting in the conclusion of the “Sharm el-Sheikh Agreement for Ending the Gaza War.” On October 13, President El-Sisi and U.S. President Trump co-chaired the Sharm el-Sheikh Peace Summit, which was attended by heads of state and government from Western countries, Arab nations, and Asian countries, among others. The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) stationed in the Sinai Peninsula continues to carry out its important mission of monitoring the cease-fire between Egypt and Israel and promoting dialogue and confidence building between the two countries. Japan continues to support the MFO through both financial support and the dispatch of staff officers, and will continue to contribute to peace and stability in the region. In August, senior vice-minister of Cabinet Office TSUJI Kiyoto inspected the MFO South Camp, and in November, MFO Director General Elizabeth L. Dibble visited Japan.

(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 cease-fire agreement in October 2020, incidents of armed clashes between the eastern and western forces have significantly decreased, and the economy has been revitalizing. In August 2025, Hanna Tetteh, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Libya, announced a roadmap for holding national elections; however, there remain numerous challenges to achieving political unification through the holding of national elections.

Since Japan reopened its embassy office in Tripoli, the country's capital, in January 2024, high-level visits between Japan and Libya have been reinvigorated. In January 2025, Vice President of the Presidential Council Abdullah Allafi visited Japan, continuing

from the previous year, and held meetings with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi and Foreign Minister Iwaya, concurring on advancing bilateral relations and promoting cooperation in areas contributing to peace for the stability of Libya. In August, Vice President Allafi again visited Japan to attend TICAD 9 and held talks with Prime Minister Ishiba. A Foreign Ministers' Meeting was also held between Acting Foreign Minister El-Taher El-Baour, who visited Japan at the same time, and Foreign Minister Iwaya, and the two sides shared their views on further promoting cooperation in the fields of human resource development and peacebuilding.

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

The Maghreb region continues to hold strategic importance in northern Africa due to its geographical advantage of being located at the junction of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa and its abundant young labor force. On the other hand, the region continues to face the challenge of overcoming economic and social instability caused by increasing poverty, regional disparities, high unemployment rates, and inflation. In addition, there are concerns about the security and safety implications of the transit and settlement of weapons and illegal immigrants and refugees from Libya and the Sahel region.

In Tunisia, Head of Government Sarra Zaafrani Zenzri was appointed in March. On the economic front, there are trends such as an increase in foreign exchange reserves due to the recovery of agricultural production and tourism revenue, and an increase in

foreign direct investment in the manufacturing, services, and renewable energy sectors. At the same time, steadily advancing structural reforms has become an urgent priority in order to address ongoing challenges such as a trade deficit, fiscal deficit, persistently high unemployment, and sluggish growth. In relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto visited Tunisia in May, and Minister of Economy and Planning Samir Abdelhafidh attended the National Day of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan in August. Furthermore, Head of Government Zaafrani participated in TICAD 9, and at the summit meeting, the two sides concurred in further strengthening their bilateral relations, including Japan's continuation of cooperation in addressing Tunisia's water shortage.

In Algeria, Prime Minister Sifi Ghrieb was appointed in September. Algeria's economy has a structure dependent on hydrocarbon exports backed by oil and natural gas reserves that are among the largest in Africa. In recent times, Algeria's natural gas exports have been attracting renewed attention in light of growing global energy demand and the trend toward diversification of energy supply sources, particularly in Europe, in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Simultaneously, a review of economic policies aimed at economic diversification is also underway, including the development of industries in non-hydrocarbon sectors and the attraction of foreign investment. In relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto visited Algeria in May and held the First Meeting of the Japan-Algeria Intergovernmental Joint Economic Committee, and former Prime Minister Nadir Larbaoui visited Japan



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration, and Tunisians Abroad Mohamed Ali Nafti of Tunisia (May 5, Tunis, Tunisia)



Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ONISHI Yohei receiving a courtesy call from the delegation of the Algerian Startup Expedition Program (ASEP) (November 27, Tokyo)

for Algeria's National Day Event of Expo in July. At TICAD 9 in August, Minister of Knowledge Economy, Start-ups and Micro-Enterprises Nouredine Ouadah participated and, through a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki, the two sides concurred on advancing cooperation in a wide range of areas, including the field of start-ups. In November, a delegation of the Algerian Startup Expedition Program (ASEP) visited Japan for the first time, and in addition to meetings with Japanese companies and government officials, paid a courtesy call on Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs ONISHI Yohei.

In Morocco, the second Akhannouch cabinet has continued governing, focusing on policy challenges such as water resources, climate change, and renewable energy. Infrastructure development in preparation for hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup is also accelerating. Regarding the Western Sahara issue,⁽³⁾ in October, UN Security Council resolution 2797 on the renewal of the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was adopted, stating that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kunimitsu meeting with Minister Delegate to the Head of Government in charge of Investment, Convergence and the Evaluation of Public Policies Karim Zidane of Morocco (October 30, Tokyo)

could constitute a most feasible solution. In relations with Japan, Minister of Investment, Convergence and Evaluation of Public Policies Karim Zidane visited Japan in October and held meetings with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kunimitsu and others, exchanging views toward deepening the economic relationship between the two countries.

⁽³⁾ The dispute between Morocco and the “Polisario Front,” a national liberation movement, over sovereignty in the Western Sahara region.

Column

Grand Opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum

On November 1, the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) finally celebrated its grand opening. GEM is the largest museum in the world dedicated to a single civilization. The opening ceremony was attended by official delegations from 79 countries. From Japan, Her Imperial Highness Princess Akiko of Mikasa attended the ceremony, and State Minister for Foreign Affairs KUNIMITSU Ayano (Member of the House of Representatives) attended as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan.

The Government of Egypt positioned the opening ceremony as a major national event and showcased the museum's inaugural moment to the world through a solemn and spectacular presentation. In his speech, which served as the highlight of the ceremony, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, made special mention of Japan as the only country referred to by name, expressing gratitude by stating, "We must also acknowledge the substantial support rendered by our friendly nation, Japan, whose support was instrumental to this colossal civilizational project." A video of a Japanese orchestra performance, recorded at Senso-ji Temple in Tokyo, was also screened at the ceremony.

The cooperation between Japan and Egypt toward the construction of GEM dates back more than 20 years, to Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Egypt in 2003. During this visit, an agreement was reached on Japan's support for the construction of the museum, and since construction began in 2006, both countries have overcome numerous challenges to finally reach the GEM's grand opening.

Japan's cooperation has spanned a wide range of areas, including the provision of yen loans for the museum's construction; the preservation and restoration of collections and exhibits, beginning with those related to Tutankhamun; technical cooperation on exhibition methods and museum operations; and the restoration of "King Khufu's Second Solar Boat," which is to be displayed in the annex of GEM. Furthermore, Japanese private companies have also been involved in the project, with Japanese-made equipment used in the glass covering the museum's exterior and exhibits, among other components.

Thanks in part to this cooperation, GEM has incorporated numerous features that Japanese visitors can enjoy. The exhibits in the flagship Tutankhamun Gallery are accompanied by explanations in Japanese, and Khufu's Boats Museum is also expected to feature Japanese-language explanations of the cooperation that has taken place thus far. Moreover, from the first day of public opening, a Japanese-language audio guide has been made available alongside Arabic and English guides, allowing visitors to hear Japanese-language commentary on many of the exhibits.

Japan will continue to support sharing with the international community the expertise in artifact preservation and restoration accumulated at GEM, as well as museum operations following the grand opening.

GEM, a new symbol of the friendly relations between Japan and Egypt, will serve as a bridge between Egypt and the world that transcends the bilateral relationship, and will contribute to Egypt's socioeconomic development.



All guests attending the opening ceremony of GEM, with the colossal statue of Ramses II (November 1, Giza, Egypt)



Signage inside GEM displayed with Japanese language