

Main points of remarks by Mr. Kazuyuki HAMADA  
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan  
“Chapter Closed in Balkans”  
“The Western Balkans and Japan”  
on September 11, 2012  
at Pristina, Republic of Kosovo

*(Introduction)*

- I would like to offer my sincere congratulations on the opening of the “Chapter Closed in Balkans,” which will become an important historic milestone for Kosovo as the end of the supervised independence.
- We appreciate letters expressing heart-felt sympathy from Kosovo to Japan in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and solidarity with Japan demonstrated by President of Kosovo Atifete JAHJAGA at the memorial concert.

*(Exchanges between the Western Balkans and Japan)*

- Prime Minister of Kosovo Hashim THACI visited Japan in June this year. In December last year, we received Foreign Minister Enver HOXHAI and Environment and Spatial Planning Minister Dardan GASHI. Other in the Western Balkan countries also sent delegations to Japan. I had many exchanges of views with the politicians and senior officials and am deeply involved in the Western Balkan, part of which was my trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina in April this year.
- Prime Minister of Japan Yoshihiko NODA welcomed the first visit of the Prime Minister of Kosovo at the summit in June, announced Japan’s intention of continuing support of the training of human resources, backed up reforms by Kosovo, and promised to keep being involved in the stability and development of the Western Balkan region. Prime Minister Thaci expressed his appreciation to thus-far support from Japan to Kosovo. He said Kosovo is seeking accession to the EU and NATO while maintaining good relations with its neighbors. I myself had a talk with the Prime Minister on our bilateral relationship and other issues.
- I paid a visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina from the end of April to early May this year. I met with Chair of the Presidency Bakir IZETBEGOVIC and Prime Minister of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Nermin NIKSIC to discuss efforts of Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the EU and NATO and recent developments in Western Balkan. The Chair and the Prime Minister highly valued the role played by Japan in nation-building of Bosnia and Herzegovina and demonstrated a strong will to advance ethnic reconciliation and accession to the EU.
- Japan intends to continue playing a vigorous role in the Western Balkan. My visit is part of such efforts.

*(Japan's efforts toward stabilization of the Western Balkan region)*

- Japan has extended humanitarian and recovery assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in Western Balkan since the ethnic conflict occurred in Yugoslavia during the 1990s. After the end of the conflict, Japan has provided grant aid in social infrastructure such as medicine, education, and water supply. Our bilateral ODAs to the Western Balkans totaled 159.3 billion yen (about 2 billion dollars). In recent years, we are trying to enhance administrative capabilities through technical assistance and also started cultural grant aid.
- For Kosovo, Japan began assistance through international organizations in the wake of the ethnic conflict and carried out humanitarian assistance as well as assistance in relation to reconstruction and development. A total assistance added up to 190.34 million dollars. The bilateral ODA centered on countermeasures against climate change in grant aid and technical support. So far, we have contributed a total of 1.226 billion yen (about 15.52 million dollars).
- Japan is keeping a close eye on the European integration process involving the Western Balkan region. In line with the progress of democratization and economic level, Japan is determined to continue its support for efforts to reform and grow the economy.

*(Efforts by the EU to stabilize the Western Balkan region and assessment of the political landscape in the Western Balkan)*

- Japan welcomes the efforts by the EU to stabilize the region while demonstrating future prospects for Europe including accession to the EU. The Western Balkan region as a whole is making progress toward stabilization and development.
- Japan welcomes 7 agreements that came out of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade where the EU acted as intermediary. We highly commend the efforts by the negotiators and the EU.

*(Conclusion)*

- Conductor Toshio YANAGISAWA active in Kosovo established a multi-ethnic Balkan chamber orchestra, hoping for co-prosperity and reconciliation of different Balkan ethnic groups through music. He gave concerts at North Mitrovica, Tokyo, Sarajevo, New York, and Beograd.
- Yesterday, Foreign Minister Hoxhaj and I signed and exchanged official documents for granting musical instrument to the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra where Mr. Yanagisawa serves as the principal conductor. I hope that the musical instrument provided by Japanese people will echo throughout the region as a sound of peace under the baton of Mr. Yanagisawa.

(End)