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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN CONSTRUCTING A PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS REGION: A JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE

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Keynote Speech by Senior Vice-Minister Mitsuya
for the
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Introduction

Good Morning.

Chief Executive Tan Sri Rastam of ISIS Malaysia,

Chairman Rizal Sukma of ASEAN-ISIS,

ISIS participants from throughout ASEAN,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you very much for this chance to speak with
you today.

I am so pleased to have the opportunity at this 28th
Asia-Pacific Roundtable to discuss on behalf of the

Japanese government “Opportunities and challenges in constructing a peaceful and prosperous region: A Japanese perspective”. I will talk about my thoughts on this topic.

Importance of the Asia-Pacific region

The rapid growth that the Asia-Pacific continues to enjoy has transformed the region into a global economic center. The GDP of the Asia-Pacific now accounts for 60% of the entire world's GDP, and this percentage is likely to grow in future. It is indeed a global growth center.

The universal values of liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for basic human rights are also steadily taking hold. The Asia-Pacific region has great

potential to contribute to the development of humankind in the 21st century.

Since assuming office in December 2012, Prime Minister Abe has visited 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including all 10 ASEAN countries, culminating in the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting held last December in Tokyo, where a vision was presented for further expanding cooperative ties.

In addition, on May 30, Prime Minister Abe made a keynote speech in Singapore. Considering the situation in the South China Sea, he proposed the accomplishment of the rule of law in the sea and the enhancement of the function of the East Asia Summit. In that speech, Prime Minister Abe also explained in detail how Japan is trying to contribute to the

peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

These testify to Japan's full cognizance of the Asia-Pacific region's importance.

It is perhaps no exaggeration to state that the 21st century is the age of the Asia-Pacific region.

| | |--| | Security issues in the Asia-Pacific region | |--|

Nevertheless, this promising region faces a host of challenges. These include such security issues as the growing threat of mass destruction weapons exemplified by North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and missiles, the sharp rise in military spending and arms trade within the region, and coercive attempts to change the status quo that threaten the freedoms of navigation and overflight on

the high seas. Challenges in non-traditional areas of security such as terrorism, cyberattacks, transnational crime and natural disasters are also on the rise, and these dangers are undermining mutual trust at an unprecedented rate.

We are deeply concerned about the unilateral actions in the East China and South China Seas that have heightened tensions. The peace and stability of these sea areas are of concern to the entire international community, and I think it is important that all countries involved comply with relevant international law and clarify their claims based on international law.

The freedom of overflight on the high seas is one more critical issue. All parties should strictly refrain from unilateral actions that unduly infringe on this freedom or threaten the safe operation of aircraft.

The surge in military spending and arms trade within the region is yet another serious matter. More than one country has greater than doubled its defense expenditures over the past ten years. There is reason to worry that increased military spending will give rise to a security dilemma by triggering still further military spending. I believe that Asia should achieve growth not by expanding its armaments but rather by investing in sectors that enable economic growth.

Issue resolution approaches to be taken within the region

What should the countries of the region do to tackle these issues? There are three approaches that we should take.

The first is cooperation for enhancing the global commons.

It is vital that we expand “the rule of law”, not “the rule by force” to maintain and develop the “open and stable seas”.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, regulates the freedom of navigation on the high seas and the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. At present, 165 countries and the EU have concluded this convention, and getting more countries to sign on will help make the rule of law more effective. The laws we should all obey are apparent. As Prime Minister Abe stated the other day at a meeting in Singapore, there are three principles for resolving disputes in accordance with the rule of law.

First, states shall clarify the legal grounds for their own claims.

Second, states shall not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims.

Third, states shall seek to settle disputes peacefully based on the law.

The Japanese government asks that all countries involved observe these three principles. We also call on the international community to support countries that uphold these principles, in other words, countries that respect and accept the rule of law.

These three principles should also be meticulously applied to the South China Sea where disputes over

territorial rights and problems arising from undelimited exclusive economic zones and continental shelf boundaries exist. Even now we continue to witness confrontations and attempts to resolve disputes unilaterally through force.

The international community has a great interest in these South China Sea issues. We believe these issues should be resolved peacefully through dialogue in accordance with the law.

Japan welcomes the agreement reached peacefully the other day by Indonesia and the Philippines on delimitation of their overlapping exclusive economic zones, in line with UNCLOS and other international laws. We also heartily endorse the Philippines' stance in seeking to settle disputes in accordance with the law, Vietnam's attempts to resolve issues through

dialogue, and ASEAN's concerted efforts to protect the international order of the seas based on law.

An approach that would help resolve one of the issues surrounding the South China Sea would be the conclusion by ASEAN and China of an effective Code of Conduct (or COC) harking back to the spirit and norms of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea to which all the involved countries committed. Japan will be urging all the parties concerned to conclude this COC swiftly.

The second approach is reinforcing regional architecture.

The Asia-Pacific region is characterized by a great diversity among its countries in developmental stages, political and economic systems, and security

perspectives, so it has opted for the approach of progressively reinforcing multi-tiered frameworks rather than pursuing a unified, organized structure like NATO in Europe.

As a confidence-building framework at the foreign minister level, the ASEAN Regional Forum (or ARF) has delivered results in non-traditional security areas such as disaster relief exercises and counter-terrorism efforts. The expanded ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (known as ADMM-Plus) is also an important framework for cooperation between defense authorities. We need to further strengthen regional cooperation frameworks in the area of security by enhancing the functions and roles of the East Asia Summit (or EAS).

It is imperative that we bolster the frameworks for

security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region at multiple levels by stepping up collaboration between the EAS as a summit-level dialogue forum and the ARF and ADMM-Plus as ministerial-level frameworks.

Transparency and mutual trust should serve as the principles for improving these regional frameworks.

The third approach is strengthening partnerships based on trust.

With President Obama's recent tour of Asia, we reaffirmed the US' engagement in this region. The US presence is essential for the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, and Japan welcomes the US' rebalancing toward Asia.

Japan will further buttress the Japan-US alliance as

the linchpin of Japan's diplomacy. Strengthening the Japan-US alliance will contribute to the safety and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, and we will seek to do this by revamping the Japan-US Defense Cooperation Guidelines among other steps.

Relations with China are also significant, as China is a major power and a significant player in the Asia-Pacific region. The door to dialogue on improving relations between Japan and China is always open.

It is important that we build trust and strengthen the partnerships with ASEAN countries by pursuing security cooperation and capacity building assistance.

Strengthening partnerships based on trust is thus a key element in resolving the challenges faced by the

Asia-Pacific region.

These are the three approaches that we should take.

Japan's contributions to resolve issues in the
Asia-Pacific region

Japan has been engaged in concrete efforts such as disaster relief exercises via dialogue on regional security in the ARF, which was established in 1994. We have also promoted confidence building by cooperating in particular in non-traditional security areas such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

By participating in discussions, exercises and other efforts in the ADMM-Plus created in 2010, we have

also developed more practical cooperation in six areas, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Japan participated in the ADMM-Plus Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Relief and Military Medicine Exercise conducted last June in Brunei, where it maintained and improved its operational capabilities for international emergency relief activities and promoted mutual understanding and cooperation with other participating countries.

It is well-known that the Asia-Pacific is a region prone to natural disasters. In addition to participating in disaster relief exercises, Japan has been proactive in upgrading ICT systems for situational control, stockpiling emergency supplies, and developing human resources at the AHA Center, established in

2011 as a regional mechanism for managing and responding to disasters in the ASEAN area.

With respect to assisting ASEAN in disaster management, at last December's ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting, Japan announced a package designed to bolster ASEAN-Japan cooperation in disaster management, including 300 billion yen in aid over five years and training for 1000 disaster management personnel.

Japan responded promptly to the typhoon damage suffered by the Philippines last year by dispatching the Japan Disaster Relief Team comprising civilian medical teams and Self-Defense Force units. Following the disappearance of the aircraft of the Malaysia Airlines in March, Japan, as a member of the regional community, dispatched aircrafts from both

the Self-Defense Forces and the Japan Coast Guard to participate in search and rescue efforts.

We have thus built the foundations that enable us to employ our capabilities in actual practice by continuing dialogue, deepening cooperation and participating in exercises.

Japan's efforts seem to have met with a favorable reception in Asia. A recent public opinion poll about Japan taken in seven ASEAN countries made clear that these countries view Japan as a key partner. We see this as a manifestation of these countries' expectations of Japan.

Japan's future role in the Asia-Pacific region

We take pride in the fact that Japan's path as a

peaceful nation has won it the acclaim of the international community. We recognize that Japan's future role is to embody the three approaches mentioned earlier from the standpoint of being a "proactive contributor to peace" based on the principle of international cooperation.

With the Asia-Pacific region confronting a variety of challenges, we think Japan should play an even more active role appropriate to its strength as a nation. Japan will further strengthen the Japan-US alliance, continue to cooperate with ASEAN and other partners inside and outside the region, and contribute more than ever to the region's peace and prosperity to bring about Asia which is built on democracy, rules, free trade, peace and stability and where partnerships based on mutual trust are established.

As part of this, we will support capacity building in ASEAN countries and elsewhere. We hope to strategically utilize ODA to continue cooperating in maritime safety by developing human resources, providing patrol vessels and undertaking other efforts. By conducting joint-training and exercises, we would like to contribute to improving the maritime safety and security capabilities.

Japan is presently conducting fundamental review of security policy.

At last December's ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting and on other occasions, we have been offering ASEAN countries detailed explanations of Japan's stance on being a "proactive contributor to peace," and this posture has received robust support. As a step in this direction, we are now seeking to

revamp Japan's own legal basis for security so that we can better contribute to the region's peace, stability, and prosperity.

On May 15, a report was submitted to the government by an advisory panel of experts who had studied the relationship between the Constitution and the right of collective self-defense, collective security, and UN peacekeeping operations for the reconstruction of Japan's legal basis for security. Upon receiving this report, the Prime Minister outlined a basic direction for future studies, and the government is currently weighing its response while engaging in discussions with the ruling parties.

With the power balance between states changing, technological innovation progressing, and threats and risks diversifying, no country can safeguard its own

peace and security alone in today's complex global security environment. Countries need to cooperate to achieve peace and stability within the international community. Japan is determined to become an even more active contributor, and it is looking at overhauling its legal basis for security to that end.

For example, both Japan and ASEAN countries are major players in supporting UN peacekeeping operations, which require close coordination on the ground. Currently, however, Self-Defense Force units participating in peacekeeping operations are not permitted to rush to the aid and protection of their counterparts from ASEAN countries in the event of an attack by guerillas. On the other hand, Self-Defense Force units can receive protection from units dispatched by ASEAN countries. We are now reflecting on whether this is really acceptable and how

Japan can contribute.

In examining the legal basis for Japan's security, we will address particular cases such as these and give due consideration to logical consistency with the government's previous interpretations of the Constitution and to legal stability for the sake of protecting the lives and livelihoods of the Japanese people. Japan's post-war course for the past 70 years or so as a peaceful nation contributing to regional peace and stability has not changed, and will not be changed, in the slightest. The approaches we are taking now are aimed at making this course more certain, and we will continue to carefully explain our intentions to countries concerned in ASEAN and elsewhere.

The most prominent feature of the Asia-Pacific region is its political, economic, linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. The region has been leveraging this diversity to sustain its development as a world growth center. Maximum respect for this diversity is the key to regional prosperity and stabilities, and we want to pursue mutual cooperation and dialogue. Japan will seek in the future to collaborate with countries in the region and to take the initiative in tackling various issues in order to contribute more than ever to peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific. On that note I will conclude my keynote speech.

Thank you for your kind attention.