

Speech by Mr. Masayoshi Kamohara,
Ambassador-designate of Japan to the Republic of Kazakhstan,
at the 12th Ministerial Meeting on CAREC
(Astana, October 24, 2013)

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, allow me to stress that Japan highly appreciates the annual meeting on CAREC, an important event for discussing regional cooperation. We also consider it necessary for pursuing the stability and development of the whole region. I would like to reiterate that Japan has attached a great importance to Central Asia, which lies at the crossroad of the Eurasian Continent, remains a key region to solve global issues such as diffusion of drugs, and is recognized as a region with enormous potential of economic development. Japan has an intention to further develop bilateral relations with each country of this region. At the same time, Japan will continue to promote regional cooperation through the “Central Asia plus Japan” Dialogue, which we believe corresponds to the direction of CAREC.

Earlier this week, on October 22, the 7th Senior Officials’ Meeting of “Central Asia plus Japan” was held in Bishkek, where we confirmed the advancement of regional cooperation in several areas such as disaster management, border control, environment and healthcare. We also had a fruitful discussion on how to pursue regional cooperation in trade and investment promotion, in which we underscored necessity of improving connectivity through transport infrastructure as well as efforts towards trade facilitation. We felt an enthusiasm among Central Asian countries that the Dialogue should be result-oriented, while sharing the common understanding about the necessity of regional cooperation, especially when we should take into account the future situation of Afghanistan. The 5th Ministerial Meeting is scheduled next summer in Bishkek, just before the planned withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan, namely by the end of next year. We will work further to have concrete and clear perspective for regional cooperation in preparation for the ministerial meeting.

I am also pleased to have an opportunity to be here together with colleagues from JICA, who are actively supporting CAREC initiative, including the transport sector and trade facilitation. With regard to Japan’s achievement since 1997, when CAREC was established, the total committed amount of loans

and grants in the transport sector, including road, railway, aviation, for the 10 CAREC member countries currently stands at 5 billion USD and 0.5 billion USD respectively as of the end of September 2013..

For example, our ongoing projects on infrastructure development include loans for the CAREC Corridor #1 road project in Kazakhstan and the Karshi-Termez Railway Electrification Project in Uzbekistan; grants for several CAREC Corridor #3 road projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which would eliminate transport and trade bottlenecks, and promote flow of people and goods.

However, regional development cannot be achieved by infrastructure development only, and capacity development and institutional building are also indispensable. Japan has been working on this. For example, once infrastructure is constructed, it is of at most importance to maintain and operate it properly. Bearing this in mind, Japan's cooperation includes dispatching experts for road administration, technical assistance and grant aid for operation and maintenance of roads. Taking another example, Japan has started a training course this year, called "Regional Development along Trunk Road in Central Asia and Caucasus Region". In this course, participants are provided opportunity to observe the experience of a region in Japan as to "the scenic byway", an approach to regional promotion utilizing assets along trunk roads such as nature, cultural sites and recreational facilities.

Besides the transport sector, Japan has also been addressing trade facilitation issues through the capacity building of government officials and provision of equipment for customs inspection. When we consider cooperation in the transport and trade sector, connectivity between Central Asia and South Asia is also important. Connection with South Asia, which is a big market with huge population and has an exit to other parts of the world through seaports, can bring big business opportunity for land-locked CAREC countries.

We would like to continue our commitment to these projects in line with CAREC2020's strategic objectives and Wuhan Action Plan, bearing in mind the importance of the combination of infrastructure development and capacity building.

Thank you very much.

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