

Statement by H.E. Mr. TOKUDA Shuichi,
Deputy Assistant Minister, Deputy Director-General,
European Affairs Bureau,
Ambassador, Special Representative for Central Asia /
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Special Representative for GUAM,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
at the 19th Ministerial Conference on CAREC
(Teleconference, December 7, 2020)

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Government of Afghanistan and the Asian Development Bank as the CAREC Secretariat for organizing this conference. While COVID-19 poses a threat to humanity, this infection provides an opportunity for global and regional cooperation. We are united in building articulate joint responses to COVID-19. In this regard, Japan has been providing grant aid for health and medical equipment totaling 3.1 billion Japanese yen toward CAREC member countries. Moreover, we are actively engaging in sharing information, lessons learned, and experiences of addressing infectious diseases, including exchanging opinions by teleconferences among medical experts.

With regard to Afghanistan, Conference chair, Japan supports the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, and strongly hopes that the ongoing negotiations in Doha will lead to sustainable peace and prosperity in Afghanistan, which is also essential for the regional stability. As Japanese Foreign Minister MOTEGI expressed at the Geneva Conference on Afghanistan on November 24, Japan will remain committed to Afghanistan and work on maintaining the current level of assistance for the coming four years.

The "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, which we six countries launched in 2004, has been our key platform for enhancing regional cooperation. Japan supports "open, stable and self-sustained" development of Central Asian countries as a "catalyst" for regional cooperation. In recent years we are witnessing more cooperation and wider coherence among Central Asian countries, in particular under ongoing COVID-19 responses. Japan welcomes this trend and reaffirms its commitment to continue contribution for solidarity among Central Asian countries.

Japan appreciates CAREC's valuable role in providing a constructive platform for regional cooperation. Japan will continue to collaborate with international organizations and donor countries, whose representatives are here today. Expanded coordination is needed in order to unleash the potential and to enhance prosperity in this region.

I thank you for your attention.