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Remarks by Yutaka Iimura,
Special Representative of the Government of Japan
for the Middle East and Europe
at the OSCE Ministerial Council
6-7 December 2011

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to begin by expressing my deepest respect for the leadership of H.E. Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis in presiding over this OSCE Ministerial Council. Let me also extend my heartfelt gratitude for the warm sympathy and support from the OSCE Participating States, Partners for Co-operation and international organizations in the wake of the unprecedented earthquake and tsunami which struck Japan on March 11.

The OSCE has greatly contributed from early on to the stability and prosperity of its region, under the concept of comprehensive security, which encompasses arms control, conflict prevention, economic and environmental activities, as well as the consolidation of human rights and democracy. Japan shares a similar belief in a comprehensive concept in ensuring its own security, and thus attaches great importance to cooperation with the OSCE as a Partner for Co-operation.

A significant number of challenges that confront the OSCE – such as transnational threat, energy security, transportation, as well as the consolidation of human rights and democracy – require the broad cooperation of not just OSCE Participating States, but the international community as a whole, including non-member states of the OSCE.

The Government of Japan contributed 2.72 million euro to the “OSCE border management projects” in 2009 in order to support “the Border Guard Assistance in Turkmenistan”, “Training-the-Trainer Course for Afghan Police Officers on Counter Narcotics in Tajikistan” and “Development of a Customs Training Facility in Kyrgyzstan”.

Japan has also actively participated in the activities of the OSCE by dispatching so far over 200 observers to OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions.

Another example of our cooperation is that Japan recently decided to assist “The Project for Improvement of Water Analysis Skill” and “The Project for Construction of a Women’s Center in Kulob City” in cooperation with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, respectively. Japan will continue to actively deepen and promote its cooperation with the OSCE.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Asia-Pacific region is inseparably linked to the regional peace and stability of the OSCE Participating States. Today the future of the Asia-Pacific region is increasingly uncertain, as the balance of power among regional states shifts, while the economic and social interdependence is significantly deepening and the networks of regional cooperation are rapidly developing.

One of the most serious problems that confront the region is North Korea's development programs of nuclear and ballistic missiles including uranium enrichment. It is not only a serious destabilizing factor in the regional security but also a grave threat to the peace and stability of the entire international community. In addition, the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea is a universal issue of concern as a violation of human rights. It must be regarded seriously by the entire international community as it threatens the very foundation of human security.

It is important for us all, including for the OSCE Participating States, to deepen our understanding of the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region, with its many destabilizing factors.

In this security environment, Japan will continue to strengthen relationships with countries sharing common fundamental values like democracy and human rights, while doing its utmost efforts to integrate the countries of different political systems into the networks of cooperation and

dialogue. To this end, we consider it important to further develop regional security frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and East Asia Summit process.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE has played a major role as a forum for dialogue, adapting itself to evolution of European security priorities over time. The Asia-Pacific countries, now in the process of establishing common rules for the shared goal of regional security, can learn much from the OSCE's experiences and rich knowledge. Japan therefore sincerely hopes that the OSCE and the Asia-Pacific region will continue to develop the dialogue that they now enjoy, in order to further promote concrete cooperation between the two. Japan intends to serve as a bridge between our two regions in this area as well.

Thank you for your attention.