

Statement by His Excellency Mr. Jun Yamada
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Republic of Kazakhstan
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Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate the Asian Development Bank, which serves as the CAREC Secretariat, and the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan on holding today's important meeting. Japan appreciates the constructive role of CAREC which actively promotes mutual relationship and cooperation among Central Asia / Caucasus and neighboring countries

More than anything, Japan welcomes the initiatives by CAREC member states to revitalize regional cooperation in the era of rapid and drastic changes. This will certainly contribute to the autonomous and sustainable development of CAREC members. Japan is determined to promote further development of this region, on the basis of long-standing friendly and cooperative relationship with the CAREC member states.

Being surrounded by Asia, Europe and the Middle East, many CAREC members including those in the Central Asia and Caucasus are such vital existences for so many other countries. For example, they have been historically critical logistics hubs connecting Asia and Europe, up to and including now world-famous Trans-Caspian corridor. Also, thanks to the healthy population growth and economic development, the region has enormous potential as a new center of business. Moreover, the recent upheaval of international situation surrounding Ukraine and the Middle East has even further elevated the geopolitical significance of this region.

Against such background of drastically changing international situation, it is absolutely indispensable for the CAREC countries, which possess substantial potential for an economic take-off, to adopt completely new growth models in order to realize autonomous and sustainable development. In this sense, Japan intends to deepen our cooperation with CAREC countries in such new areas as human capacity development, Green and Sustainable Economy, stable trade routes that can be free and shielded from regional disturbances.

In this context I wish to refer to the "Central Asia + Japan" framework, which has just celebrated its 20-th anniversary this year. Together with the Central Asian counterparts, Japan pioneered this unique format of dialogue already 20 years ago, in order to proactively encourage the mutual cooperation among regional neighbors. Ever since Japan has been offering various forms of assistance through ODA and other tools throughout many decades, focusing on such areas as "human development" and "growth with quality". Japan will continue such cooperation

with CAREC countries including Central Asia still further, so that we could make a meaningful contribution to the region's autonomous and sustainable economic development, poverty reduction, and cleaner environment. In doing so, we will always focus on the perspectives of human development, growth with quality and regional connectivity.

Japan highly values CAREC's important role in providing a constructive platform for such regional cooperation. We will strive to safeguard and further enhance a rule-based international order by upgrading already very close and friendly relations with CAREC member states, which aspire for free, open and sustainable development. It is a great honor for Japan to continue to pursue such development by cooperating with CAREC member states, ADB, international financial institutions and other donor countries ever more closely.

Thank you very much for your attention.