

**MESSAGE FROM H.E. MR. TARO KONO
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE**

Today marks the 70th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 II as a plan for the partition of Palestine. In this resolution, the international community drew a future for two states, Palestine and Israel. The latter gained its cherished goal of statehood, achieving part of the vision drawn by the international community. However, Palestine has still not achieved its full independence.

During the past 70 years, some people in the Middle East have reaped the benefit from nation building and social development. Peace has been achieved between some of the countries. On the other hand, it is also true that the repeated conflicts and clashes forced many people to leave their homes, and some people lost their lives. The international community has continued its efforts for peace, together with Palestinians and Israelis. We still maintain hope and faith in peace, and have made constant efforts. However, settlements continue to grow in their number, and the suffering of the Palestinian people continues to grow as well. Settlement activities are in violation of international law, and Japan has repeatedly called upon Israel to completely freeze such activities.

In Gaza, the deteriorating humanitarian situation makes people's lives more difficult. Recently there was a positive step with regard to reconciliation among the Palestinians. I hope that the relevant parties take this opportunity and move swiftly to ease people's hardships in Gaza. Japan will continue its humanitarian assistance to the people in Gaza.

Under these circumstances, Japan has extended enduring assistance to Palestine on its state building efforts, with a view to making the economy of a future independent Palestine sustainable. The "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" is one such initiative to promote regional prosperity through economic development of Palestine, in cooperation with Jordan and Israel. The Jericho Agro-Industrial Park celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. 8 Palestinian companies started operation in the Park thus far, creating jobs for

Palestinians. I recently expressed that Japan will keep working on the initiative for its further upgrade, expanding its scope to cover logistics and IT fields.

Peace will not be achieved only by humanitarian assistance and economic development. However, we cannot leave people to suffer just because there is a lack of progress in the peace process. Japan will continue its support to the Palestinians so that they can move forward – even one step at a time— toward their earnest goal of statehood. Through its initiatives in confidence building, Japan will continue contributing to creating an atmosphere where both parties will engage in face-to-face dialogue, and take positive steps towards peace, realizing a final resolution of the conflict in the Middle East.

I pray that one day, at the earliest possible time, Palestine will develop peacefully together with Israel.