

**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**

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express once again, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, my sincere hope for the realization of peace in the Middle East at the earliest date possible with an independent Palestinian state and Israel co-existing in peace and security.

Seventy years have passed since Palestine's "Nakba" in Arabic, "catastrophe". The prospects for resuming direct talks to conclude a peace agreement are uncertain and the situation remains serious. Especially in Gaza, people's lives are difficult because of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

To end the chain of hatred and search for a breakthrough, it is necessary for both parties to face each other with determined political will for solving the issue. What the international community can do is to support them by creating an atmosphere conducive to it. Even if it is difficult to realize peace in the Middle East, Japan, as a friend of Palestine, will make further efforts in its own approach, whether it is political or economic, to contribute to the realization. Japan will continue to play its role, wherever possible, in providing assistance for confidence building between both parties, nation building for a future Palestinian state, and improvement of the situation in Gaza.

The Jericho Agro-Industrial Park is a flagship project of the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" Initiative and has been ongoing for more than 10 years in order to achieve the development of the private sector in Palestine. 13 Palestinian companies now have begun operations in the Park where nothing used to be at the beginning. Japan will keep working on to make JAIP further attractive for the companies through encouraging logistics and IT business.

Japan launched the "Conference on Cooperation among East Asian countries for the Palestinian Development (CEAPAD)" in order to utilize the knowledge and experience of economic development in East Asian countries for the development of Palestine. This year, Japan arranged "CEAPAD Tour" of the West Bank including JAIP to offer a good opportunity for East Asian countries to get to know Palestine better. Japan

will continue supporting Palestine together with East Asian countries.

The Middle East Peace Process is one of the priorities to be solved for the international community. There will not be real peace and stability in the Middle East without solving this issue. Japan understands the Palestinians' longstanding aspiration for state-building and supports a two-state solution through negotiations.

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