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**Address by H.E. Ambassador Yukio Takasu,
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations
On the occasion of the High-level Plenary of the Midterm Review
of the Almaty Programme of Action, October 2, 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

It is my greatest pleasure, as the representative of Japan and as a facilitator, to speak here today at the High-level mid-term review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Japan has consistently advocated the importance of “ownership” and “partnership” as a backbone of development. Under this principle, a developing country establishes its own priority, direction and strategy for development and then strives to realize these priorities under a spirit of ownership. Developing countries should take primary responsibility for their development, but their efforts should be complemented by strong and sustained commitments from its global partners. This philosophy is well embodied in the Almaty Programme of Action and should guide us in its implementation.

Since the adoption of the Almaty programme of action, many LLDCs showed steady progress in terms of expanding their GDP and attracting foreign direct investment. This achievement is made possible above all by self-help efforts of LLDCs, to which Japan expresses its highest respect. But it should be stressed that progress was achieved also through their cooperation with transit developing countries, as well as partnership with donor countries and international organizations.

At the same time, we should be mindful, as the report of the Secretary-General noted, that much remains to be done to effectively implement the Almaty Programme of Action.

Mr. Chairman,

For the overall economic development of LLDCs, the promotion of exports and the importation of essential goods at competitive prices is of utmost importance. Being geographically disadvantaged, LLDCs must put a priority on infrastructure improvement. Only with the development of appropriate infrastructure, can economic activities be accelerated and trade and investment promoted. I would like to share with you some of Japan’s partnership in these areas in different regions.

I would like to begin with Africa, where many LLDCs are located. LLDCs in Africa are particularly affected by high transportation costs and weak infrastructure. It is necessary to narrow the distance between LLDCs and the world market by improving power and transportation infrastructure, and by connecting missing links in road networks throughout Africa as well as the port facilities of transit countries.

With this in mind, Japan has taken the initiative to support the implementation of the NEPAD Short-term Action Plan on Infrastructure (STAP) as well as the medium and long term infrastructure development programs in Africa. First, Japan hosted the fourth meeting of Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA) in Tokyo last March. Then in May, Japan co-hosted the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) with the UN, UNDP and the World Bank, where the need to focus on the development of region-wide infrastructure was emphasized. There was a consensus that all efforts should be made to strengthen cooperation to promote the development of road networks, ports and power infrastructure as an engine for growth, using ICA as the platform. Moreover, Japan pledged up to US\$ 4 billion of soft loans to Africa over the next five years, to give a momentum to regional infrastructure improvement projects throughout the continent so as to attract private investment necessary for Africa's economic growth. At the same occasion, the World Bank and the African Development Bank announced that they will extend financing to the order of US\$5 billion per year for the development of transport corridors and power networks during the same five year period.

The improvement of transportation infrastructure should not be limited to physical infrastructure such as roads and ports. Institutional infrastructure including customs, quarantine, and immigration procedures at borders needs to be improved as well. Japan extends assistance through JICA to establish "One Stop Border Posts (OSBP)" which would enable necessary procedures to be completed at one stop. For example, Japan has been supporting the establishment of the border post on the *Chirundu* Bridge between Zambia and Zimbabwe for OSBP through various assistance measures, including the establishing of a legal framework, staff training and construction of bridges and other border facilities. At TICAD IV, Japan announced that it would extend such assistance to fourteen other border posts.

However, infrastructure improvements alone cannot increase trade and investments in LLDCs. There needs to be strong government efforts to improve the investment climate for attracting private sectors. Japan pledged at TICAD IV, as its commitment to international trade and trade facilitation, that it would support the efforts to double the investment from Japan to Africa. To follow up on our commitments, Japan recently sent several joint public-private sector missions with a view to promoting trade and investment in a number of African LLDCs, including Uganda, Botswana and Ethiopia. To make our relations with LLDCs in Africa even stronger, Japan opened Embassies in Mali, Botswana and Malawi this year, and will do so in Burkina Faso next year.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan's support towards landlocked and transit developing countries goes beyond the African continent. Japan is also actively engaged in other parts of the world in promoting regional cooperation and integration, which is indispensable for the development of LLDCs and transit countries. Japan's consistent support through ESCAP for the Asian Highway project is well known. Also, the countries in the Mekong Region are working together on regional integration within three major "Corridors" running east to west and north to south.

In December 2006, the Second Mekong International Bridge, which links Thailand with Laos, was opened with Japanese assistance, making the “East-West Corridor” almost complete. We also pledged early this year US\$20 million to facilitate the trade of commodities via this “Corridor.”

To name a few examples of Japan’s recent support for other LLDC and transit countries; Japan provided Afghanistan with more than US\$ 2.5 billion since 2002 for infrastructure projects such as for an airport and major roads. We also started helping in the construction of an international airport in Mongolia; helped lay a railway network in Uzbekistan; contributed to building or improving roads, bridges and tunnels in countries such as Tajikistan, Pakistan, Nepal and Bolivia. In Central Asia we have been sending experts on road administration and providing equipment for customs control facilities.

Mr. Chairman,

When we look at what many Asian countries have experienced in recent years, trade promotion clearly makes significant contributions to the economic growth of developing countries. Therefore, it is important to consider development assistance from the viewpoint of how trade is promoted. With this belief in mind, Japan has been implementing the “Development Initiative for Trade” since 2005, its purpose being to operationalize “Aid for Trade”. This initiative aims at assisting developing countries to acquire export capacity and to further benefit from the global trading system. Japan will continue to provide landlocked and transit developing countries with assistance to facilitate trade promotion.

Many landlocked countries also have major challenges in the area of climate change adaptation, including forest degradation and desertification. In this regard, Japan established the “Cool Earth Partnership” to support those developing countries that are trying to achieve economic growth while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Japan pledged US\$ 10 billion to be disbursed over five years under this initiative. We collaborate closely with international organizations to support developing countries including LLDCs, which are most vulnerable to climate change, in their adaptation efforts. As part of this initiative, Japan earlier this year supported the establishment of the Japan-UNDP Joint Framework for building Partnerships to Address Climate Change in Africa, under which we welcome concrete project proposals for implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

In the informal negotiations prior to this high-level meeting, we conducted a review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. Through this process, LLDCs have demonstrated the sense of primary responsibility for their development, and cooperation with transit developing countries, donors, and international organizations is vital for this development. We made utmost efforts in striking the balance between the needs of LLDCs and the cooperation with transit developing countries. I firmly believe that the declaration which was agreed upon based on these considerations has tremendous value in enabling LLDCs to further integrate themselves into the global economy and thereby benefiting from access to the world market.

For the negotiations on the outcome document for this review meeting, as when the Almaty

Programme of Action was being negotiated five years ago, Japan had the honor to serve as a facilitator. The outcome document, which is now appropriately titled as a declaration, was successfully agreed upon three weeks before today's meeting. This achievement was made possible through the cooperation of all those concerned. I take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to all for their understanding and cooperation. In particular, invariable contributions of High Representative Ambassador Diarra and his colleagues are greatly appreciated. It is also solid proof that the international community has been united in their support for landlocked and transit developing countries. Let us demonstrate the same spirit of cooperation for the next five years to faithfully implement the Almaty Programme of Action and the recommendations contained in the declaration on the mid-term review. Please rest assured that Japan is determined to make every possible effort to help them achieve their objectives, as a strong partner that landlocked and transit developing countries can have full confidence in.

Thank you very much for your attention.