

【Check Against Delivery】
Opening Remarks of Mr. Kiminori IWAMA,
Ambassador of Japan to Austria
Permanent Representative to the OSCE
OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group Meeting
“Economic Connectivity: Ensuring peace and security in the
OSCE region and beyond”
July 7th, 2025 10:00-12:30

Thank you.

Let me start by thanking Malta, chair of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation, for recognizing the value of the partners in the OSCE and for its commitment to increase the visibility of the activities of the Asian Partners.

Madam chair,

Japan values the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, which encompasses politico-military, economic, environmental and human dimensions. This approach is highly compatible with Japan's guiding principle of international cooperation: human security.

Sustainable development requires economic connectivity that strengthens international competitiveness and builds resilience through facilitating efficient logistics and the smooth flow of goods and people.

Economic connectivity includes a wide range of diverse aspects, including physical connectivity such as road networks and institutional connectivity allowing for trade facilitation, including in the field of customs and duties.

Deepening economic interdependence makes security and economic issues of individual countries more likely to affect others,

increasing security risks such as food security, instability, and rising prices, as the consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine have shown. Addressing such risks requires cooperation that transcends regional boundaries, regardless of whether they occur in the Euro-Atlantic or the Indo-Pacific region.

Madam chair,

Located in the Indo-Pacific region, which accounts for one-third of the world's oceans, Japan proposed the vision of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)". This vision, proposed by then Prime Minister Abe in 2016, was updated in 2023 by former Prime Minister Kishida. As clearly indicated in Mr. Kishida's speech in 2023, "we should reaffirm and share the understanding that at the root of the concept of FOIP is defending freedom and the rule of law". FOIP also respects diversity, inclusiveness and openness. We will enhance the connectivity of the Indo-Pacific region, foster the region into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, free from force or coercion, and make it prosperous.

Although the FOIP has the Indo-Pacific region in mind, I am convinced that the basic principle such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity expressed in the Helsinki Final Act and the UN Charter should be adhered to in every corner of the world.

Looking at the reality in the Indo-Pacific region, attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force are continuing and intensifying. China's external posture and military activities are serious concerns to the international community.

In addition, Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a similar attempt in Europe, and Japan has been vocal about it since the beginning of the aggression. We call on Russia to take a positive action toward a comprehensive ceasefire and the realization of a just and lasting peace. Japan is concerned that China is supporting Russia's war sustainability. We strongly hope that

China would change their behavior and meet their responsibilities as responsible major powers.

Madam chair,

In order to increase economic connectivity, it is also important to create a free, fair, and rules-based economic order. Given the potential threats through economic means, it is also necessary to enhance economic resilience in respective countries to ensure economic security.

In Japan, the Economic Security Promotion Act was approved in 2022 in order to ensure national security from an economic perspective. It is based on the recognition that security concerns are rapidly expanding into the economic field due to an increasingly complex international situation and changes in the socio-economic structure. Under the Act, the government is addressing issues such as the emergence of vulnerabilities in the supply chain as a result of increased cross-border economic activities, increase in cyber-attacks and other threats to key infrastructure projects, as well as intensification of struggle for supremacy over cutting-edge technologies. Consequently, Japan appreciates the role played by the OSCE in addressing those challenges.

Finally, given the diverse nature of economic connectivity, we are pleased to welcome our speakers with a range of expertise to today's meeting. In particular, as an Asian Partner for Co-operation, we are happy to welcome a speaker from the Philippines, who will provide us with a perspective from Indo-Pacific with their concrete efforts to address freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. After we hear the overview of economic connectivity, we look forward to hearing Europe's views on the risk and opportunities of economic connectivity from the Czech Republic. It is also noteworthy to hear the efforts to improve connectivity in Central Asia and the OSCE's efforts in the region.

I thank you.