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Statement by H.E. Mr. Motohide Yoshikawa
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations
At the Debate of the United Nations General Assembly
On Agenda Item 35: “The Situation in the Middle East” and
Agenda Item 36: “The Question of Palestine”

26 November 2013

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening today’s meeting. I am pleased to participate in the deliberation of the General Assembly today as I have been engaged in Middle East affairs in my previous diplomatic assignments.

I wish to address both agenda Item 35: “The Situation in the Middle East” and agenda Item 36: “The Question of Palestine” together. I would like to thank Permanent Representative of Senegal, the Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for introducing the four draft resolutions under agenda item 36. My sincere appreciation also goes to Permanent Representative of Egypt, who will introduce the two draft resolutions under agenda item 35 later today.

Mr. President,

Almost a year ago, on the commemorative occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, the General Assembly adopted a historic resolution that accorded to Palestine non-member observer State status at the United Nations. In light of our position supporting a two-state solution, Japan voted in favor of this resolution.
Both parties should now seize the window of opportunity, opened by the resumption of direct negotiations last July. In this context, we deeply deplore that in October and November, the Israeli Government announced plans to approve tenders for the construction of housing units in the West Bank. We would like to call upon both parties not to take unilateral action that might negatively affect the peace process but to continue faithfully negotiations.

Mr. President,

We believe that helping Palestinians create viable economic foundations will contribute to advancing the political process. Given the current delicate phase of direct negotiations, it becomes all the more important for the international community to work toward the co-existence and prosperity of Palestinians and its neighbors.

From this standpoint, Japan will accelerate its assistance for Palestinian development. We will continue with our two concrete initiatives aimed at mobilizing private sector investment in Palestine.

The first is the initiative called “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity”. This was launched by Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan in July 2006 when he visited Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. Its flagship project “Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP)” is designed to transform an area of Jordan Valley into productive and fertile land, thereby facilitating Palestinians to export agricultural products. The Agro-Industrial Park’s beneficial economic impact is estimated at more than 40 million US dollars per year. About 7,000 new jobs can be created. I wish to emphasize that it also offers important opportunities to build confidence among key stakeholders in the region, as it involves not only Palestine but also Israel and Jordan.
Japanese Government has been supporting this project through UN agencies as well. For instance, my Government recently exchanged notes with UNDP for the execution of two projects: one is to support the construction of an electrical substation to supply electricity to various facilities on the Park’s premises. Our contributions to this project now amount to more than 1 million US dollars. The other is to help develop management capacity for the Palestinian Industrial Estates and Free Zone Authority. This Authority is the leading Palestinian agency in charge of the Agro-Industrial Park. Japan will disburse a total of 400,000 US dollars to that end.

The Park is scheduled to start its operation next year. Already two Palestinian companies have signed contracts with “Jericho Agro-Industrial Park Company”, which is the developer of the Park. There are around thirty companies that have shown an interest in joining. We look forward to welcoming private companies in the Middle East and other regions of the world in joining the project.

The second Japanese initiative is the “Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development” or CEAPAD. Co-hosted by Japan and Palestine, this conference was launched in February this year in Tokyo with the participation of 7 countries (Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Brunei Darussalam, Republic of Korea) as well as relevant international organizations. It is a process aimed at mobilizing and sharing East Asian economic development experiences and resources for the sake of Palestinian development.

As a follow-up, Japan will host a business promotion meeting in Tokyo next week. We have invited private sector representatives this time. The meeting will aim at exploring ways to strengthen their business relations with Palestine. The outcome of the meeting will be submitted to the second ministerial meeting of CEAPAD, scheduled to be held in Indonesia early next year. We are grateful to Indonesia for its valuable support.
Mr. President,

Providing vital assistance to Palestinian refugees to improve their plight has been high on my country’s agenda. On 11 November, my Government announced a contribution amounting to 7.7 million US dollars in food aid to UNRWA. This grant will be used for the purchase of wheat flour and other commodities. They will be distributed to 300,000 Palestinian refugees living in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. In the same vein, on 21 November, Japan exchanged formal notes with the WFP to provide food aid in the amount of 4.1 million US dollars to the Palestinian people.

With respect to UNRWA, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of my Government, to my friend and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Filippo Grandi, who will soon leave UNRWA. I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude for his contribution and dedication to UNRWA. I also look forward to working closely with his successor, Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl.

Mr. President,

The resumption of direct negotiations in July has opened the door to a two-state solution. We are already midway in the agreed timeframe of nine months. Japan strongly urges both sides to act to enhance mutual trust and continue to make steady efforts for peace. Japan will stand ready to support their endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. President.