

**Statement by Mr. Masataka Okano, Counselor, Embassy of Japan**

Topic: Japan-US-Australia security dialogue for enhancing coordination with ASEAN countries in order to counter terrorist activities in the region

Dr. Radvani, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my great honor to be invited to this forum today.

Let me first say that Mr. Ryozo Kato, Japanese Ambassador to the US would like to congratulate his old friend Dr. Radvani on this workshop, which deals with an important and timely subject. Ambassador Kato wishes him great success with this initiative. The topic I have been asked to speak upon is that of Japan-US-Australia security dialogue for enhancing coordination with ASEAN countries in order to counter terrorist activities within the region. Therefore I will discuss Japan's policy on counter-terrorism, our contribution toward securing the Malacca straits, and the cooperation between Japan, the United States, and Australia. But before giving you the details of the Japanese Government's point of view, I would first would like to share with you my personal views about how important the counter-terrorism agenda is for the Japanese people and how we see the terrorism situation in South East Asia.

On the morning of March 20, 1995, I was in my office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On that day I came to the office a little earlier because I was scheduled to receive the Deputy Secretary General of the OECD at 8:00. Our meeting was interrupted by the noisy sirens of patrol cars. We sensed that something extremely serious had happened but we could not figure out what it was all about. It turned out that at that time, on the very line of the subway I used every morning, the Sarin gas attack had occurred. In five coordinated attacks, the conspirators released Sarin gas on several lines of the Tokyo Subway, killing twelve people and injuring some six thousand people. I would have been one of these victims

and would not be here today if I had not gone to the office earlier than usual and taken my usual train. This was (and remains, as of 2006) the most serious attack that has occurred in Japan since the end of the Second World War. It was clearly an act of domestic terrorism by a fanatic pseudo-religious group.

I saw the horrible images of 9/11 attacks on CNN in Beijing. After a working dinner I came home and turned on CNN. At first I thought I was watching a different channel and it was a movie, but then I realized it was live. The scale between the two attacks is different, but I felt a similar sense of helplessness in the face of those brutal acts.

We have lost two colleagues who were members of our staff at our embassy in Iraq. Heinous acts deprived those competent diplomats of their lives. We felt at a loss for words in the face of these barbarous acts of extremism.

Some people say that Japan is lucky because we are away from the regions of violent extremism. But the threat of terrorism is ubiquitous in the world today. Japan is no exception.

To fight against terrorism is important, but to simply repeat strong slogans is not enough. Threat is everywhere and often invisible. We must define how to allocate our resources in order to get maximum results from our counter-terrorism operations. We should have a clear understanding about who and where our enemies are and mobilize our resources through international cooperation. While addressing the root cause behind the growing terrorism is important, in the short term we should also continue to pursue international cooperation in order to make sure that there will be no safe havens for terrorists in the region.

Australia, the US and Japan started a trilateral consultation on counterterrorism last September. We share our assessments of the terrorism situation in the

world and discuss how to deal with these challenges. Our three countries share the basic values of freedom, democracy, and rule of law; and our interests in counter-terrorism in the region converge perfectly. We are satisfied with this dialogue and will continue. At the same time, this counter-terrorism is not our own exclusive agenda. On the contrary, cooperation among the all countries in the Asia-Pacific region is of vital importance. The cooperation of those countries especially vulnerable to terrorist attacks is particularly indispensable. While continuing this trilateral dialogue, Japan will pursue a dialogue with our South East Asian friends by also supporting their counter terrorism efforts. Securing economic development and social stability in South East Asia has been Japan's long-standing foreign policy priority and that will not change.

Let me now turn to the issue of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

The security in the Straits is extremely important for the political and economic security of Japan and the international community. Approximately 174 vessels over 300 tons pass through these Straits every day and 36.5% of these vessels are petrol and LNG / LPG tankers. 11 million barrels of oil go through the region daily and 36% goes to Japan and 17% goes respectively to China and the Republic of Korea. 76% of the oil imported by China goes through these Straits and the Chinese share is now increasing. To ensure free and secure passage immune from terrorism in these straits is a big challenge not only for Japan but for all the countries in the region, including the US.

To this purpose, Japan, as one of the larger users, has been actively cooperating with other major user nations Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. We have also paid attention to the sensitivity of the littoral states in terms of their sovereignty. The first pillar of our policy toward this region is to provide building assistance in order to enhance the maritime law-enforcement capacity of the littoral states. Since 1980 we have carried out the Maritime Telecommunication System

Development Project in Indonesia, implementing yen loans to make sure of the maritime safety in the region and to support counter-terrorism efforts. We have dispatched experts from JICA and the Japan Coast Guard to Indonesia and Malaysia. The Japan Coast Guard has carried out joint exercises with the Malaysian Marine Police and the Indonesian Marine Police. We have received maritime law enforcement officers from Indonesia and Malaysia for training. And, from this year forward, we will start a new type of yen-grant to this region focused solely on counter-terrorism and the fight against piracy in the region.

In the private sector, since 1969, the Japanese NGOs have made contributions totaling \$150 million to ensure navigation safety and environmental protection in the Straits.

The second pillar of our policy involves the encouragement of mutual cooperation among the littoral states. Effective cooperation is not feasible without the initiative and the understanding of the littoral States. In this context, we are inviting all the relevant countries to finalize the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia (aka, RECAAP).

We cannot emphasize too much the importance of assuring security in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore for the whole international community. Japan has made an individual effort and we are proud of that, but obviously that is not enough. Good cooperation and good division of labor between the littoral states and the user states is indispensable. Burden sharing, inter-operability, avoidance of redundancy and good networking are the challenges we are facing. Japan will intensify its efforts toward cooperation with the littoral states as well as the other user States. In this regard, we would welcome more active cooperation by the relevant responsible stakeholders in these Straits.

Last but not least, I would like to emphasize the role of the US. The US has enormous strength in the region in the fields of security, politics and economy. It has made major visible and invisible contributions to the security of these Straits. The presence of the US is a positive factor in the region and we welcome active

US engagement in the Straits.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach. The safety of the Straits should be addressed by whole-hearted cooperation between the littoral States and the user states while respecting the sovereignty of each respective nation. Bilateral assistance should be well coordinated to achieve maximum effectiveness. Japan will continue its efforts to secure the safety of the Straits through the framework of bilateral cooperation and we will listen carefully to what Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have to say. We will also continue our trilateral dialogue with the US and Australia to enhance our anti-terrorism cooperation. And we will continue our commitment to this cooperation within international frameworks such as the International Maritime Organization. Through such commitment and cooperative efforts it can be hoped that a spirit of team work will be nurtured and that security in the Straits can be maintained, thus contributing to stability and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific Region.

Thank you for your attention.