

**REMARKS BY
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JAPAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
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Bismillah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim;

Ambassador Satoh,
Members of the Board,
Institute Staff,
Distinguished Guests:

I am honored to speak before this esteemed institution. The Japan Institute of International Affairs plays an important role in advancing global understanding, and I am delighted to join you in that dialogue.

This is my eighth visit to this great country. And I come at an important period of transition, for both Japan and Jordan. In the decades following the Second World War, Japan established itself as both a global economic power and a proponent of world peace. Today, Prime Minister Abe envisions a "Beautiful Japan" – a Japan rooted in its traditional values, underpinned by free society ... a Japan that enjoys its rightful place on the world stage.

These are objectives that we in Jordan have also set for ourselves. And indeed, Japan is helping us reach them. Your commitment to Jordan's development has led to improvements in a variety of essential areas: infrastructure, export capabilities, health care and education. Japan has played an important role in vocational training – a cornerstone of modern workforce capabilities. And other assistance has come in the form of debt rescheduling, grants, and support for the national budget.

Allow me to say: Jordanians are grateful for Japan's unwavering support. Your country helped Jordan keep moving forward in the first Gulf War ... when we tackled austerity measures in 1996 ... when His Majesty King Hussein passed away ... and now, as Jordan and the world face the impact of our region's crises. My friends, to Jordanians, Japan's actions define global leadership. And we appreciate and deeply honor your friendship.

Japan's support has made an especially critical contribution to Jordan's wide-ranging reform efforts – political, economic, and social. These will help sustain our development, and enhance our participation in the global economy.

Today, our economy is growing at over 6.5 % a year. Jordanian products reach more markets than ever before. Our country is increasingly becoming a hub and gateway for global and regional business. Jordanians now have access to the knowledge, skills, and technology they need to succeed in the world.

These strides have helped Jordan move to higher income levels. And Jordan is leading a collective effort to create sustained advances through sound economic management and reform. Last September, Jordan convened the first summit of Lower-Middle Income Countries. Our objective, as a group, is to work together *and* partner with the international community to consolidate our economic, political and social gains. We count on Japan's support in this endeavor.

Jordan has also emerged as a regional leader in political and social reforms. Last year, the National Agenda was prepared. This document identified our national reform priorities in all areas for the next ten years. We are building on it every day. And I am proud to tell you that earlier this month, the Anti-Corruption Commission Law came into force. It establishes an independent body entrusted with combating corruption in the public sector.

In the coming months, lawmakers are also expected to pass legislation that will enshrine political pluralism, significantly broaden access to information and liberalize the media.

Our educational system is also making tremendous strides. We have implemented a technology-based educational program that is emulated in the region and beyond. The new content is providing Jordanian students with the tools they need to participate in the global economy.

Like Japan, Jordan is eager to share its success to advance peace, democracy and stability in our region. Responsibility for others is a central teaching of our religion. Islam honors the shared humanity of all people, and explicitly condemns extremism. This is the view of the vast, moderate majority of Muslims. I believe it is key to the future of our world – and no where more so, than in the Middle East.

Our region is facing a profound crisis. Its elements are tremendous human suffering, weapons proliferation, and an alarming escalation in the frequency and intensity of crises. This situation is an invitation to interference from regional hegemonic powers and extremists.

Demographics make these trends all the more worrying. In the Middle East, more than half the population is 18 or younger. They want and deserve opportunities to share in the promise of this century. And they desperately need an alternative to extremism and violence. Regionwide, meeting youth expectations will require 50 million new jobs by 2010, and more than 200 million by 2020.

We must work together to meet these challenges head on.

Japan already plays an important role in our region – as an economic partner and as a development model and supporter. Last summer, Prime Minister Koizumi and I discussed Japan's innovative concept for peace-building in our region. The Corridor for Peace and Prosperity envisions economic cooperation among the economies of the Jordan River Valley, spanning Jordan, Palestine and Israel. It is an initiative based on the principle of sustainable peace. In this respect, Japan's role in our region is not only economic, but also political.

My friends,

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is at the heart of the tension in our region. It is the grievance that extremists and regional power-seekers play upon, to expand their influence and perpetuate conflict. The continued failure to find a resolution threatens to aggravate other crises in our region.

We can end this threat. The first step is a just settlement of the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis ... the catalyst of a wider and more comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace. There is already a sound basis to work from. The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 envisioned a way to reach both sides with what they want and need: security guarantees between all Arab states and Israel ... Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 ... and a sovereign, viable, and independent Palestine. This is an opening that must not be ignored.

The second step is ensuring *sustainable* peace. For peace to be lasting it must also combine security with vibrant economic growth; a viable Palestinian state must be capable of sustained economic development. It must bring together people, governments and business in partnerships... and it must deliver tangible benefits.

The time to engage Japan's proposal is now. Ways to advance this initiative were part of our discussions when we met Prime Minister Abe and other Japanese officials earlier today. And we will be full partners.

We also share concerns over the conflict in Iraq. We have urged a new international emphasis on political, economic and diplomatic measures. We need to focus on the elements of a sustained peace: supporting Iraq's unity, promoting reconciliation and restoring confidence in the political process. All Iraqis need clear affirmation that the new Iraq will respect their rights and security. The three major social groups must all be engaged, including the Sunni community.

We must also lend our support to the Lebanese people as they struggle to retain their unity and sovereignty.

And of course, the persistence of nuclear weapons proliferation is one global challenge that our two countries must use every diplomatic means to confront.

My friends,

The history of your country carries an important message: peace and prosperity are possible, even after long and destructive conflicts.

Your sense of responsibility and your wisdom have given you a significant role in prosperity and progress in the Middle East. And today, we have entered an era in which Japanese leadership is not only welcome – it is vital. As partners and as friends, we can find a way out of today's dangers... and move forward to a future of peace and promise.

Thank you very much.