

Japan

**Statement by Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
of Japan, Masaji Matsuyama, at the Meeting for the African-led
International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA)**

Tuesday, January 29, 2013
At the headquarters of the African Union (AU)

Your Excellency, AU President Ato Hailemariam Desalegn,
Your Excellency, ECOWAS President Mr. Alassane Dramane Ouattara,
Excellencies, Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to express my respect for the initiative of the co-chairs of this meeting, AU President Ato Hailemariam Desalegn and ECOWAS President Mr. Alassane Dramane Ouattara, and for the efforts made so far by those engaged in solving the problems in the Sahel region, as well as the strong will and commitment of France, Mali's neighboring countries, and others now fighting with Mali for the stability of northern Mali.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my condolences to the persons killed and their families in the hostage crisis in Algeria and offer my sympathies to those injured. The government of Japan strongly condemns this despicable act of terrorism which deprived innocent people of their happiness and their lives.

This incident reminds us of the magnitude of the threat of terrorism and of the immeasurable suffering caused by acts of terrorism. The fight against terrorism in the Sahel region, especially in northern Mali, must be strengthened, and the international community should offer substantial support to the efforts taken by African countries.

I would like to reiterate the importance of dealing with the problems of severe poverty and unemployment among young people and ensuring human security, thereby creating a society where people can have hope for the future. This will be the fundamental means of eliminating terrorism.

Co-chairs,

The government of Japan greatly appreciates the proactive efforts taken by African countries to ensure peace and stability in recent years, and has offered support for PKO Training Centers and for peace and security activities by the AU, ECOWAS, and other regional organizations. We also respect the fact that ECOWAS, countries in the region, and the AU have proactively taken measures to address the recent problems in Mali.

The government of Japan regards the poverty reduction and the promotion of economic development including food security as the key elements to the stability in the Sahel region. In this regard, the government of Japan is now considering additional support in the amount of 120 million US dollars to assist refugees and IDPs, to

strengthen the governance and security sectors in Mali and the Sahel region. This additional assistance includes support for the peacekeeping training center which provides training to improve military and police capability for West African countries. Last year, the government of Japan offered 63 million US dollars in humanitarian assistance and food aid to the drought-affected Sahel region. We hope that these assistances will further improve the achievements of AFISMA as well as to reduce poverty, which is the breeding ground for terrorism.

Co-chairs,

Jointly with the African Union Commission, the United Nations, the UN Development Program, and the World Bank, the government of Japan will hold the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) in Japan from June 1 to 3 this year. One of the major themes of TICAD V is peace and stability, which is the basis for development and growth. We will deepen discussions on measures that can be taken to assist the efforts of African countries to promote peace and stability, and responses to cross-border issues such as terrorism and drug trafficking. The problems of Mali and the Sahel region are particularly complicated and will require the collective wisdom of the international community to resolve. We will place an intense focus on this.

Co-chairs,

The government of Japan earnestly hopes that peace and stability can be restored in Mali and the Sahel region as a whole so that people there can move forward with hope in the future. For this purpose, we are committed to continuing to support African-led initiatives in cooperation with the international community.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.