

Japan’s Seamless Efforts for Peacebuilding: One of Japan’s Key Diplomatic Initiatives

In conflict regions, Japan is addressing peacebuilding as one of its major diplomatic issues, which is seamless efforts ranging from the promotion of peace processes and emergency humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath of conflicts to security maintenance, reconstruction and long-term development, while also paying attention to building the foundation for development to prevent conflict recurrence and achieving sustainable peace. In April 2010, during Japan’s presidency of the UN Security Council, then Minister for Foreign Affairs Katsuya Okada chaired a ministerial debate on post-conflict peacebuilding. Peacebuilding was also addressed at the UN Security Council summit in September 2010 attended by then Prime Minister Naoto Kan, and the importance of this field is becoming recognized by the international community. Japan has been advancing tangible efforts for peacebuilding through contributions including UN peacekeeping operations (PKO), on-site efforts with official development assistance (ODA), work through the UN and human resources development.

UN Peacekeeping Operations and Japan’s Contribution

Given the transition of the international community such as increase of internal armed conflicts after the end of the Cold War, duties of UN peacekeeping operations have undergone a diversification process. Recent UN peacekeeping operations does not only focus on traditional mandates such as monitoring of ceasefire but also include duties such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, mine countermeasures, security sector reform (SSR) and other activities associated with the rule of law, protection and promotion of human rights, support for the holding of elections, support for restoration and enhancement of governance, and coordination with entities in charge of humanitarian assistance and social and economic reconstruction and development. Japan is contributing to these UN peacekeeping operations by dispatching International Peace Cooperation Corps including Self-Defense Forces (SDF) officers on the basis of the Law Concerning Cooperation for the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (the International Peace Cooperation Law), by organizing programs for capacity building of personnel contributing to

peacekeeping and peacebuilding in order to expand global and regional capability for peacekeeping operations, and by supporting peacekeeping training centers in African and Asian countries.

Example 1: Dispatch of International Peace Cooperation Corps

Currently, Japan is dispatching nearly 400 personnel to four United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. This includes SDF transport units consisting of 43 officers and three staff officers to the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) since February 1996, SDF engineering unit consisting of about 320 members and two staff officers to the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since February 2010, two military liaison officers to the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) since September 2010 and two staff officers to UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) since November 2011. Japan has thus dispatched to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations a total of more than 6,000 SDF personnel since the International Peace Cooperation Law took effect in 1992. On December 20, 2011, the Government of Japan decided to dispatch an SDF engineering unit consisting of up to 330 personnel and one staff officer to UNMISS. Japan recognizes that peace and stability of South Sudan is important for the peace and stability of Africa, and that support for the nation-building and stability of South Sudan is one of the significant challenges which the international community needs to work on cooperatively. Japan will continue to cooperate with the international community and make proactive efforts toward the achievement of peace and stability in South Sudan.

Example 2: Capacity Building Efforts in the Field of Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

Japan is organizing programs for capacity building of staffs contributing to peacekeeping and peacebuilding such as the Program for Human Resource Development in Asia for Peacebuilding. The program was launched in 2007 to develop Japanese and other Asian civilian experts who will contribute to peacebuilding. About 160 participants finished the program and they are actively working at the field in conflict emerging countries such as Sudan, Afghanistan and Timor-Leste.

On September 5-16 in 2011, the Governments of Japan and the United States co-hosted the 2nd Japan-U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative Senior Mission Leaders' Course

(GPOI-SML). The course has its origin in the G8 Action Plan to expand global capability for peace support operations, launched by the G8 leaders at the 2004 G8 Sea Island Summit. As recent United Nations peacekeeping missions are increasingly multifunctional, the importance of an integrated approach among civilian, military and police units continues to grow. The course emphasized mission planning, preparation, operating and command as a strategic level exercise. Course participants were 23 officials in total from military, police, and civilian fields and were from 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, six Japanese included. The graduates are expected to assume senior posts associated with peacekeeping missions.

In the field of capability building for peacekeeping operations, Japan is assisting peacekeeping training centers in African and Asian countries. Since 2008, Japan has provided assistance of more than 23.7 million US dollars for peacekeeping training centers in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Benin, Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Malaysia. Japan also dispatched total of 21 instructors for peacekeeping training centers in Ghana, Mali, Egypt, Kenya, and Malaysia.

Peacebuilding Efforts through ODA

Peacebuilding constitutes an important part of Japan's international cooperation. The country's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter regards peacebuilding as one of the most important challenges. The "ODA Review" prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2010 lists "investing in peace" as one of the "Three Pillars of Development Cooperation." At the UN Security Council summit held in September 2010, then Prime Minister Naoto Kan said, "Can we call the mere absence of a state of war or conflict 'peace'? No, that is not the case. Restoring peace and lives of the people destroyed by war, conflicts and natural disaster leads to true peace." Seamless and comprehensive efforts are required for peacebuilding, ranging from assistance aimed at promoting the termination of conflicts to support for ensuring the peace process and nation-building, as well as for conflict prevention and emergency humanitarian assistance. From the perspective of such human security, Japan has been making proactive efforts for peacebuilding assistance in various places in the world such as Afghanistan, Africa and Iraq.

Example: Mindanao in the Philippines

Among specific examples of Japanese assistance for terminating conflicts is the support for the peace process in Mindanao, the Philippines.

The peace process between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is based in Mindanao, led to a ceasefire agreement in 2003 after approximately 40 years of armed conflict. In August 2008, armed conflict recurred when national coordination for the resolution of pending land problems failed, but peace negotiations resumed in February 2010.

Japan has contributed to progress in the Mindanao peace process and to the reconstruction and development of the Mindanao region mainly through the following three measures based on the recognition that peace in Mindanao is indispensable for peace and prosperity in Asia:

(1) Japan intensively implements ODA projects in the conflict-affected areas in order to bring about peace and stability; these include the construction of school buildings, water supply facilities, health centers and small-scale infrastructure including roads, human resource development, and assistance for rice farming. Japan's assistance for peace and stability in Mindanao in total is called the "Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD)" and is well known among residents in Mindanao ("Bangsamoro" refers to Muslims in Mindanao).

(2) Japan has been dispatching development experts from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the socioeconomic assistance component of the Mindanao-based International Monitoring Team (IMT), which monitors the ceasefire. They are engaged in such activities as grasping reconstruction and economic needs in the conflict-affected areas, and drawing up and monitoring assistance projects.

(3) Japan participates in the International Contact Group (ICG), which takes part in the peace negotiations as observers to give advice to the parties concerned.

In August 2011, Japan helped to hold an informal meeting between H.E. Mr. Benigno S. Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines, and Mr. Al Haj Murad, Chairman of the Central Committee of MILF, in the suburbs of Tokyo at the request of the Philippines. It was the first meeting between the top leaders of the parties concerned. Japan welcomed that this meeting became a meaningful opportunity for smoothly proceeding with the Mindanao peace process, and is pleased to have been able to contribute to the realization of the meeting.

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