

Mr. Bessho (Japan):

I thank the presidency for convening this debate and for preparing the concept note (S/2017/305, annex) before us. I would also like to thank Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov for his briefing. S/PV.7929 The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question 20/04/2017 20/65 17-10629 Today I will address the wider Middle East region, focusing on some of the challenges defining the present day Middle East. The Middle East peace process is one of the central issues shaping international relations in the region. The conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian sides feeds into wider regional dynamics and the opportunity cost has been immense.

Peace there would unlock new political, economic, security and cultural opportunities, to the benefit of the region and beyond. To achieve peace, underlying issues of conflict, including settlement activities and violence, must be addressed. Japan's position has been clear and consistent. Settlement activities are in violation of international law, and the recent announcement by the Israeli Government that it will build a new settlement is deeply concerning. Japan is also concerned by the continuing violence. Various instruments, such as the Quartet report and most recently, resolution 2334 (2016), provide steps towards credible negotiations, which is the only way to achieve lasting peace. Japan calls upon both parties to take concrete steps to that end, and continues to support a two-State solution to accommodate the aspirations of both sides.

The spread of terrorism and violent extremism is an issue that plagues the region. In Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, the deterioration of governance, coupled with conflict and political turmoil, has benefited terrorist groups, further escalating tensions and exacerbating conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also not free from the risk of radicalization. The effects of regional turmoil have spread far beyond its source, as we have seen in the massive movements of refugees and migrants and the expansion of terror threats into Africa and Asia. We have seen some progress in our fight against terrorism. Japan believes that unless further efforts are made to strengthen governance, it will be difficult to consolidate the gains made and to counter the social, economic and political conditions that feed violent extremism. To strengthen governance, progress in the political process is necessary.

As the Secretary-General noted in his first statement to the Security Council (see S/PV.7857), we need a surge in diplomacy. We definitely need it in Syria and Yemen. Libya also requires further international support to make headway on the political track. The United Nations, including the Security Council, has an important role to play. While each country's political process should be different, Japan believes that creating tolerant and stable societies embodying coexistence and inclusivity is a common goal for the region. Such societies are resilient to violent extremism, spillover conflicts and relapse into conflict. That goal should complement the political process. In this regard, Japan stresses the need to focus on three issues: humanitarian assistance, including host community support, social stability and governance, and investment in human capital.

To give an example, Japan has contributed to the United Nations Development Programme Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization in Iraq, to support the early return of internally displaced persons to their homes and to enhance social resilience. Through measures such as the restoration of key infrastructure and generation of income and employment opportunities, we support the Government of Iraq in stabilizing the newly liberated areas to ensure that they do not slide back into turmoil. Turning to Yemen, Japan aims to boost the resilience of urban and rural communities, in partnership with international organizations,

through micro-businesses and entrepreneurship projects that enhance the economic empowerment of women and youth. Our efforts to create inclusive societies extend to addressing the needs of the vulnerable in conflict situations.

Japan has introduced maternal and child health handbooks to Palestinian refugee communities. The handbooks help mothers and children keep track of their health conditions so that they can receive timely and appropriate medical treatment. Most recently, we have launched a smartphone app of the handbook in Jordan, thereby making it more convenient and accessible. We aim to further expand the coverage of the app in the coming years. In closing, Japan reiterates the need for a shared region-wide effort to achieve enduring peace. Efforts to create tolerant and stable societies should complement the political process. Japan attaches importance to post-conflict reconstruction efforts that build and consolidate peace under a credible political process, and will continue to actively engage in such efforts. We must also bear in mind that peace can have a positive ripple effect. Japan remains convinced that a successful Middle East peace process will unlock the potential for region-wide stability and prosperity.