

**Joint Press Statement by Japan and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste  
“Comprehensive Partnership towards Sustainable Growth and Development”**

**Tokyo, 16<sup>th</sup>December 2023**

1. H.E. Mr. KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan, and H.E. Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, who visited Japan from 15th to 19th December 2023 for the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, held a summit meeting on 16th December and had a fruitful exchange of views both on the relationship between Japan and Timor-Leste and regional and international cooperation.
2. Building upon more than 20 years of friendly and cooperative relations including Japan’s contribution to Timor-Leste’s development as a peaceful and democratic nation, both leaders expressed their willingness to further promote the bilateral relationship by elevating it from the “Advanced Partnership towards Growth and Prosperity” to the “Comprehensive Partnership towards Sustainable Growth and Development.”

**[Overview]**

3. Both leaders reaffirmed that the two countries share fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, human rights and dignity, and the rule of law, which constitute a significant foundation of their bilateral relations. Both leaders stressed their strong commitment to global peace and the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In this context, both leaders expressed their commitment to further promote dialogue at various levels and concrete cooperation in a wide range of areas.
4. Prime Minister Kishida commended Timor-Leste’s steady efforts in its national development since the restoration of independence in 2002. Prime Minister Gusmão expressed his appreciation for Japan’s assistance to these efforts in areas such as infrastructure development, economic diversification, social service delivery, and capacity building including human resource development.
5. Given that Timor-Leste has been granted an observer status and admitted in principle to be the 11th member of ASEAN at the ASEAN Summit Meeting in 2022, Prime Minister Kishida reiterated Japan’s support for Timor-Leste’s accession to ASEAN and its commitment to assisting Timor-Leste to this end. Prime Minister Gusmão expressed his appreciation to Japan’s support and assistance. Both leaders resolved to further strengthen cooperation in addressing regional and international challenges, including through supporting the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), which shares relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and cooperation with Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision.
6. Both leaders expressed their commitment to strengthening dialogue between the two countries in all areas and at all levels including through mutual visits.

### **[Peace and Stability]**

7. Prime Minister Gusmão expressed his appreciation for the Japan Self-Defense Forces' (JSDF) contribution to previous humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capacity building, and more recent maritime security and engineering cooperation, including its participation in the Exercise HARI'I HAMUTUK hosted by the Australian Defense Force. Prime Minister Gusmão also appreciated Japan's acceptance of personnel of the Timor-Leste Defense Force (F-FDTL) to its defense educational institutes. Both leaders expressed their intention to further promote bilateral defense cooperation.
8. Both leaders shared the view that the two countries would advance cooperation in the maritime field including maritime safety and security as an important pillar of bilateral cooperation, in particular through the dispatch of experts and provision of associated equipment such as Rigid-hulled Inflatable Boats (RHIBs).
9. Prime Minister Kishida commended Timor-Leste's commitment to peacebuilding of fragile and conflict-affected states in the framework of g7+.

### **[Economic Development]**

10. Both leaders shared the view that infrastructure development, economic diversification, social service delivery, and capacity building including human resource development are key areas for sustainable growth and development of Timor-Leste, and Prime Minister Kishida expressed his determination that Japan would continue and strengthen its support to Timor-Leste in these areas. Prime Minister Gusmão also appreciated Japan's contribution to economic diversification, social service delivery, and capacity building, in areas such as agriculture, fishery, forestry, environment protection, green transformation, disaster risk reduction, child nutrition, maternal health and education, including through support for communities in rural areas. Prime Minister Gusmão welcomed Japan's renewed commitment of assistance in the area of marine environment and disaster risk management.
11. Both leaders shared the view that the infrastructure sector is the engine of national development. In this context, Prime Minister Gusmão appreciated Japan's assistance to infrastructure development. Both leaders reaffirmed the growing significance of foreign investments to Timor-Leste as well as their shared commitment to continuing the effort to improve the investment environment in Timor-Leste. Prime Minister Gusmão welcomed investments from Japan's private sector and expressed his commitment to facilitating them.
12. Both leaders shared the view that Timor-Leste, as a producer of oil and natural gas, had contributed to Japan's energy security, and would continue to play an important role in this field. Both leaders reaffirmed that the two countries would continue their close cooperation in this area.

### **[Human Resource Development and People-to-People Exchange]**

13. Both leaders reaffirmed that human resource development is vital to Timor-Leste's sustainable growth and development. Prime Minister Gusmão commended Japan's

cooperation including through support for the Faculty of Engineering, Science and Technology of the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL), the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS), and other support by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV). Both leaders welcomed the dispatch of technical intern trainees to Japan and reiterated their commitment to strengthening the cooperation between the two countries in this regard, including accelerating the process to finalize the Memorandum of Cooperation on the Technical Intern Training Program.

14. In order to assist Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN, Prime Minister Kishida renewed his determination to continue its capacity building assistance to Timor-Leste through the JDS project, technical cooperation projects including training and assistance towards accession by JICA's Experts. Both leaders look forward to Timor-Leste's participation in the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Attachment Programme funded by Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). Prime Minister Gusmão appreciated Japan's contribution.
15. Both leaders shared the view that Japan's assistance to Timor-Leste's broadcasting station and the development of its legal and correctional systems would lead to the further consolidation of Timor-Leste's democratic governance and rights.
16. Both leaders stressed the importance of people-to-people exchange to reinforce the bilateral relations, including through a comprehensive people-to-people exchange project of the Japan Foundation which would benefit especially the next-generation leaders of Japan and Timor-Leste. Prime Minister Gusmão commended Japan's contribution in this field, including that approximately 1,400 Timorese youths had been invited to Japan and approximately 100 Japanese youths had been invited to Timor-Leste through the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) program, which Timor-Leste joined on the occasion of Prime Minister Gusmão's visit to Japan in 2009. Both leaders stressed the importance of strengthening Japanese language courses and Japan study in Timor-Leste including through "JICA Chair" at the UNTL and other programs by the Japan Foundation. Both leaders stressed the importance of promoting exchanges in culture and sport, building on the recently launched fruitful exchange programs both in Japan and Timor-Leste.

#### **[Regional and International Cooperation]**

17. Both leaders supported the international order based on the rule of law that promotes peace and provides mechanisms for dispute resolution, and acknowledged the universal and unified character of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the freedom of navigation and overflight, and reiterated their adherence to international law in resolving competing claims in maritime areas within the relevant provisions of UNCLOS, to ensure peace, stability and prosperity.
18. Both leaders expressed grave concern over and continue to oppose North Korea's ongoing development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). They also emphasized the importance of

addressing issues of human rights and humanitarian concerns of the international community, including the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

19. Prime Minister Kishida reiterated Japan's support for Timor-Leste's accession to WTO and its commitment to assisting Timor-Leste to this end. Prime Minister Gusmão expressed his appreciation to Japan's support and assistance.
20. Both leaders also discussed issues vital to international peace and security as well as regional stability, and reaffirmed that they would work together to address these issues.