

## **Japan Remains Committed to the World Peace and Prosperity**

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Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1965, Japan and Malta have successfully developed excellent bilateral relations. In March 2011 Japan was hit by the Great East Japan Earth Quake, a natural disaster of an unprecedented scale, but the country is now on a solid path for reconstruction. Right after the disaster President George Abela and many other distinguished figures of Malta kindly expressed their heartfelt sympathy to Japan and organised charities for the afflicted people. These efforts and initiatives were greatly encouraging. In July 2011, four months after the outbreak of the disaster, I made a visit to Malta for the presentation of a letter of credence to the President Abela. Upon that occasion, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg took the initiative to hold a concert in support for the people affected by the disaster at the Foreign Ministry, and he handed over to me the contribution by the Government of Malta to the Japanese Red Cross along with a message of sympathy. I am deeply grateful to the warm support provided by the people of Malta, which once again made me realise the solidarity and the close relations between the two countries.

Meanwhile, ungrounded allegations on Japan, especially with regards to the Senkaku Islands, were made on some recent issues of the Malta Independent by the Chinese government officials. Those allegations distort not only the facts regarding Japan's inherent territories but also Japan's foreign policy. I would hereby like to ask the readers of this established newspaper to spare a few minutes for the correct understanding of the issues concerned.

### **(1) Important Japan-China Relations**

Japan values her relations with China and has been proactively engaged in developing the bilateral relations, consistently supporting China's reform and open-door policy since the diplomatic normalisation in 1972. Particularly in the economic dimension, Japan has made substantial contribution for China's development by a long-term economic assistance and investment. Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) provided for China has totalled 45 billion US dollars since 1979, and this fact exemplifies the weight Japan has consistently laid on her relations with China.

### **(2) Japan Stands against China's Attempts to Change the Status Quo by Coercion**

In the last few years China has been heightening tension with her numerous neighbouring countries by reinforcing maritime activities in her surrounding waters, including around the Senkaku Islands, the Spratly Islands, and the Paracel Islands. While the Senkaku Islands constitute a historically and legally inherent territory of Japan, China has been attempting to topple the status quo of Japan's legal and valid control over the area by force, coercion, and intimidation, as demonstrated in the cases of a growing number of intrusions of Chinese government vessels into the Japanese territorial waters since 2008, as well as recent arson,

destruction, and looting targeting the Japanese-affiliated firms operating in China. On the other hand, Japan's consistent position is that under no circumstances shall use of military force, intimidation, and exercise of violence be condoned to realize a country's ideology or claims. It goes without saying that in the international community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, any attempt to revise the status quo by force must not be acknowledged, and Japan shall not yield to such violence.

### (3) No Territorial Issue Exists with China

The Senkaku Islands are historically and consistently an integral part of Japan's Nansei Shoto Islands. From 1885 on, surveys of the Senkaku Islands were thoroughly conducted by the Government of Japan through the agencies of Okinawa Prefecture and by way of other methods. Through these surveys, it was confirmed that the Senkaku Islands had been uninhabited and showed no trace of having been under the control of China. Based on this confirmation and the internationally accepted means of duly acquiring territorial sovereignty under international law (occupation of *terra nullius*), in January 1895 the Government of Japan formally incorporated the Senkaku Islands into her territory. Besides, given the fact that the Senkaku Islands were neither part of Taiwan nor part of the Pescadores Islands which were ceded to Japan from the Qing Dynasty of China by the Treaty of Shimonoseki which came into effect in May 1895, it is clear that these islands were not territories added to Japan by the First Sino-Japanese War. Accordingly, the Senkaku Islands are not included in the territory which Japan renounced after World War II under Article II of the San Francisco Peace Treaty signed in 1951. The Senkaku Islands were placed under the administration of the United States by Article III of the said treaty, and the administrative rights over which reverted to Japan by the Agreement between Japan and the United States Concerning the Ryukyu Islands and the Daito Islands signed in 1971. The facts outlined herein clearly indicate the unquestionable status of the Senkaku Islands being part of the territory of Japan based on the international law.

### (4) China's Ungrounded Allegations

The fact that China expressed no objection to the status of the Islands for nearly 80 years after Japan's incorporation in January 1895 indicates that China did not consider the Senkaku Islands as part of her territory. It was not until 1971 that the Government of China officially began to claim sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, after the possibility of existence of petroleum resources on the continental shelf of the East China Sea was indicated by research conducted by an agency of the United Nations. Prior to this period, in a number of maps published in China and her official news reports including the People's Daily, the Senkaku Islands were treated as Japanese territory.

Recently China has raised historical issues fundamentally irrelevant in nature to Japan's valid control over the Senkaku Islands and has been attempting to base her own assertions on the Cairo Declaration (1943) and the Potsdam Declaration (1945). In accordance with international law, the disposition of territories as consequences of war is ultimately settled not by such political documents but by international agreements such as peace treaty. Japan concluded the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951 and Peace and Amity Treaty with China in 1978. There has been no agreement with China on "shelving the issue of" the the Senkaku Islands. Against this backdrop, no issue over sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands exists vis-à-vis China in the first place, and China's own allegations have no valid grounds from the point of international law.

### (5) Japan: A Peace-Loving State

Since the end of World War II Japan has dealt with the historical problems with profound

sincerity. As a consistent peace-loving state, Japan has actively contributed to world peace and prosperity. This is a hallmark of Japan supported by its people, and will never change. In fact China herself willingly recognised not only the reflective attitude of the Government and the leaders of Japan towards the historical issues in then-Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jinbao's speech at the Japanese Diet in April 2007, but also Japan's contribution to world peace and stability by peaceful measures for the sixty years after World War II in the Japan-China Joint Declaration issued on President Hu Jintao's visit to Japan in May 2008. It should be noted that China's external posture has drastically changed only during the last few years.

Even under such circumstances, Japan has been calmly handling the issues related to the Senkaku Islands, maintaining an open dialogue and communications with China. Japan remains firmly committed to continuously contributing to peace and prosperity of the Asian region and the rest of the world.