

Message from His Excellency Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan at the Closing Plenary of the ILA 79<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference (13 December 2020)

Distinguished Guests at the International Law Association (ILA) 79th Biennial Conference, Kyoto 2020, Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me extend my heartfelt congratulations on successfully holding the conference in an online format despite a difficult situation caused by COVID-19.

Since its foundation in 1873, the ILA has been contributing to the development of international law and promoting goodwill and understanding among lawyers around the world. 1873 is also known as the year, when a Japanese term “*Kokusai-ho*” referring to “international law” was coined.

I would also like to congratulate the Japan Branch of the ILA on its 100th anniversary. I wish the Japan Branch of the ILA will continue to prosper in the future, building upon its centenary history.

I heard productive discussions had taken place for the last two weeks at the conference under the theme of “Bridging for the Future.” I highly respect the ILA for its activities that contribute to the development and promotion of international law in the international community.

Today, the international community is facing various challenges, including the spread of COVID-19 on a global scale, unilateral attempts to change the status quo, and the rise of protectionism. Japan is determined to continue to play a proactive role in establishing a free and fair order and international rules based on the rule of law.

Last month, the election of the judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was held, and a Japanese candidate, Judge IWASAWA Yuji, who is now serving as a Vice Chair of ILA, was re-elected. In addition, Judge YANAI Shunji of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) serves as the President of the Japan Branch of the ILA. These are the testaments to how much importance Japan attaches to the “rule of law.”

The role of international law will remain extremely important in the “With COVID-19 era” as well as the “Post COVID-19 era,” and we hope to continue to closely work with the ILA.

Finally I sincerely pray for the development of the ILA and I wish you and your family all the best. Thank you.