

**Arab Japan Day Symposium:
Sustainable Energy and Water Security
April 4, 2017**

**Opening remarks
HE. Rachad Bouhlal
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco**

**Good afternoon
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,**

On behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Japan, I warmly welcome and thank you for accepting our invitation to attend the 2017 Arab Japan Symposium on “sustainable energy and water security”.

First, let me convey my sincere congratulations to all members of the Council of Arab Ambassadors for the Celebration of Arab Day as well as for their great collective efforts in organizing this important symposium.

I would like to extend special thanks to the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait, His Excellency Abdul- Rahman Al Otaibi for supervising the preparations of the Arab Day celebration. My appreciation goes as well to the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates His Excellency Khaled Omran for his valuable contribution to our symposium.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all the members of the Arab community residing in Japan, who contribute so much to the economic and social development of Japan making an impact in trade, business, arts, academia, media and culture.

This gathering would not have been possible without the collaboration of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and the Ministry of Energy of the United Arab Emirates to which I convey our gratitude and sincere thanks.

Special thanks go as well to the sponsors of this event, namely the Institute of Energy Economics Japan, Japan Cooperation Center for the Middle East, Japan Cooperation Center Petroleum, Marubeni Corporation, as well as to all those who contributed with their expertise and support throughout the different points of the organization of this symposium.

Indeed, it is a rare opportunity to bring together so many decision makers, diplomats, experts, representatives from business sector, academia, and media, for an open and fruitful dialogue on a critically important and timely issue that is at the top of the Japan-Arab agenda, sustainable energy and water security.

**Excellences,
Distinguished guests,**

The 2017 Arab Japan Symposium was carefully conceived to provide an opportunity to share ideas and expertise with highly qualified experts.

Sustainable energy and water security are a common challenge for Arab countries. As is the case with Japan, Arab nations must continue to diversify their economies. This effort creates new business opportunities for our foreign partners and investors of which Japanese businesses may be strong beneficiaries.

Water and energy are linked and are interdependent. Energy is required to treat water at every phase of its extraction, distribution and use. And water is needed to use energy directly and at various intermediate phases in power generation.

The Arab energy sector is and will continue to play a vital role in the socio-economic development of Arab countries. And, as you well know Arab hydrocarbon resources have been fueling the global economy for many decades.

The Middle East and North Africa are home to more than half the world's crude oil reserves and more than a third of its natural gas. It is also the region where primary energy consumption is growing the fastest – up by 4.6% in 2015.

The need for more capacity is creating new opportunities in the Arab region. To illustrate this point, a recent study by the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies estimates that the solar potential in the Gulf Cooperation Countries could produce 300 times their current electricity consumption and 34 times their total energy demand.

All countries in Middle East and North Africa region have renewable energy policies with very ambitious targets. Some large scale solar projects are already operating in many Arab countries.

Demonstrating our regions' commitment, it is worth mentioning Abu Dhabi hosts the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), an intergovernmental organization that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future and serves as the principal platform for international cooperation.

Despite these positive examples in renewable energy, the water- energy situation remains unsustainable at several levels. Among the challenges are systemic inefficiencies in patterns of energy consumptions and production, particularly affecting severe scarcity of water in the region.

To meet the challenges and future needs for sustainable development in both energy and water sectors, the Arab States elaborated the "Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region" covering the period from 2010 to 2030. They also adopted the "Pan Arab Strategy for the Development of Renewable Energy Applications: 2010-2030".

In our increasingly interconnected world, it is essential that the international community continue to collaborate together for us to reach the desired outcomes. These are complex issues that require sophisticated and highly trained skills and expertise.

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Distinguished guests,**

Arab-Japan relations have been steadily growing closer. Of note, energy issues remain at the heart of the trade dynamics between us as Japan is one of the largest importers of oil and gas from Arab countries.

This assessment was eloquently expressed by representatives of Japan and several Arab nations during the Japan-Arab Forum for the Development of the Japan-Arab Economic Relationships held in Casablanca the 4 and 5 May 2016.

H.E Motoo Hayashi, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry and H.E Yoji Muto, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, led a distinguished delegation to the forum where they expressed the strong multilayered ties of cooperation between the Arab countries and Japan.

In the Casablanca Declaration, both sides recognized the importance of energy, including oil and natural gas, for economic growth. They emphasized their view that investment and technology development in the energy sector are an essential basis for a stable economy and development.

Arab countries welcome cooperation in both public and private sectors and seek to establish partnerships with Japanese companies to develop high quality infrastructure projects, particularly in electricity generation and water.

Both Japan and the Arab countries reiterated their common interest and strong desire to move ahead to enhance our cooperation in the field of energy to create a stable economic activity and, importantly, greater energy and water security.

In this same vein, I sincerely hope that this symposium will shed more light on these vital issues. We have the opportunity today to hear innovative ideas and proposals that may well lead to future projects that will be conducive to creating a sustainable energy environment and a good governance of water that will contribute to peace, stability and prosperity of the region and beyond to the world at large.

To discuss the situation and challenges of energy and water security in the Arab region, we are honored to have with us a number of prominent keynote speakers and panelists. Mr. Masakazu Toyoda, Chairman and CEO of the Institute of Energy Economics, Her Excellency Fatma Alshamsi, Assistant Under Secretary for Electricity and Future Energy, Ministry of Energy of the United Arab Emirates, H.E. Dr. Khalil Bin Ebrahim Hassan, Ambassador of Bahrain, Mr. Shinichi Kihara, Director of Middle East & Africa Division, of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Mr. Takeshi Kurioka, General Manager, Environment Infrastructure Department, Marubeni Corporation.

Now, I give the floor to our keynote speaker Mr. Masakazu Toyoda, Chairman and CEO of the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan.

Thank you.