
Press Conference by the Deputy Press Secretary (February 27)

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III. Questions concerning the upcoming meeting to be hosted by Japan of representatives from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Israel, and the Palestinian territories

Q: Foreign Minister Taro Aso made a comment that Japan plans to host a meeting next month, inviting officials from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Israel, and the Palestinian territories. Can you talk more about that meeting? Who will be participating? When would that be?

Mr. Taniguchi: On the 14 March the Government of Japan is inviting the representatives from three governments; the Palestinian Authority, Israel, and Jordan. This is pretty much in line with the proposal that Japan made when former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited the region last summer, proposing an initiative called the Corridor of Peace and Prosperity. The Corridor is going to develop the Jordan Gorge along the Jordan River as a place to grow agro-centric industries, and then connect the area with the Gulf states, which are supposed to be the area where the agro-products are going to be consumed. To push this initiative the Government of Japan is going to invite people from those three countries and governments.

Q: What level representatives?

Mr. Taniguchi: Let me be a bit more precise. I should say it is subject to change, but if I look at the list of the people; Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres of the State of Israel, Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and a chief representative of the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's office, and other people from these three governments will be coming. From the Japanese side, Dr. Tatsuo Arima, Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East Peace Process and other academics, as well as representatives from organizations like the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will be joining the meeting.

Sorry, I should have made it clear; there are going to be two meetings: One, to push on a governmental level the Corridor of Peace and Prosperity, which people like Deputy Prime Minister Peres are certainly going to join. There is another meeting to build confidence among the parties concerned and to that meeting, which is rather like a second-track meeting, the people that I just introduced would be joining together with Mr. Peres and others.

Q: I see, so the gentlemen that you just named, they would be on the second section of the meeting?

Mr. Taniguchi: Government officials will participate not only in the governmental level meeting, but also in the track two meeting, in which others like academics will take part.

Q: For the confidence building and the stability of the region, is that right?

Mr. Taniguchi: Yes.

Q: Would it be specifically linked to Quartet meetings that happened recently?

Mr. Taniguchi: Certainly there has to be an interrelation between this confidence building exercise and the Quartet meeting, but not necessarily, because the Japanese Government has been doing a lot of things in terms of fostering confidence among the parties concerned.

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