

The 47th Japan Cooperation Forum for the Middle East in Vienna: 'Japan's Business Strategy in an Increasingly Complex Middle East' Held

Sept 6, 2024

JCCME

JCCME hosted the 47th Japan Cooperation Forum for the Middle East in Vienna on August 22 and 23, 2024, with the support of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI).

This historic event, held since 1976, aims to establish multilayered and sustainable relationships between Middle Eastern countries and Japanese enterprises, fostering a deep understanding of the local situation and focusing on a long-term business environment. This year's forum, themed "Japan's Business Strategy in an Increasingly Complex Middle East", attracted over 220 participants, including representatives from the METI, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japanese firms, Middle East experts from both within and outside Japan. The attendees engaged in active discussions on the theme. (For the details of the program, please refer to pages 3 to 5.)

Reflecting on the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East, the Abraham Accords of September 2020 played a significant role in normalizing diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab nations such as the UAE. In early 2021, the diplomatic relations were restored between Qatar and each of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt after a rift of about three and a half years. In early 2023, Saudi Arabia and Iran also re-established their diplomatic ties. However, the Hamas-Israel intensifying conflict since October 2023 halted the momentum of these diplomatic efforts, plunging the region back into chaos. The Gaza War has also given negative economic impacts. Attacks on vessels in the Red Sea have disrupted international trades, dramatically reducing the number of ships passing through the Suez Canal and the volume of cargo handled at ports along the Red Sea coast. These events have highlighted the vulnerability of global supply chains.

All the speakers at this forum provided comprehensive analyses on politics, economy, and security, which were critical for Japanese companies in developing business strategies for the Middle East during times of uncertainty. They also shared their insights on political measures taken by the US, China, South Korea, India, and other countries.



TOMINAGA Shunichi
Chairman of JCCME



Venue of the forum in Vienna

Panel Discussion: Changes in Arabic and Iranian Diplomatic Strategies Towards Israel and Business Strategies of Japanese Companies

In closing, a panel discussion titled “Changes in Arabic and Iranian Diplomatic Strategies Towards Israel and Business Strategies of Japanese Companies” was held. The panelists examined the impact of the Gaza War on various sectors, shared their views on the current geopolitical landscape, provided forecasts for the impact of 2024 U.S. presidential election results, and discussed emerging trends, events, and changes from multiple perspectives.

This forum was a valuable opportunity to explore how Japanese enterprises should navigate the intensifying uncertainty and to gain knowledge and insights for building mutually beneficial relationships between Middle Eastern countries and Japan. Meanwhile, all onsite attendees participated in a separated networking session. This confirmed that participants at the forum strongly preferred in-person communication. The morning sessions, added to the program for the first time, attracted many participants and were highly appreciated by the attendees as excellent opportunities for exchanging in-depth comments.

JCCME will continue to strive towards our goal of being a robust hub between the Middle East and Japan, as well as public and private sectors, based on the outcomes of discussions and surveys conducted in this forum.

###

The 47th Japan Cooperation Forum for the Middle East

Japan's Business Strategy

in an Increasingly Complex Middle East

August 22 and 23, 2024

Venue: InterContinental Vienna

Day 1: August 22, 2024

- 09:00-09:05 **Opening Remarks** by MIYANAGA Shunichi, Chairman of JCCME
- 09:05-09:10 **Guest Remarks** by MIZUUCHI Ryuta, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Austria
- 09:10-10:10 **Keynote Speech I** - Japan's Business Strategy in the Middle East by MATSUO Takehiko, Vice-Minister for International Affairs, METI
- 10:10-10:30 <Coffee Break>
- 10:30-11:30 **Keynote Speech II** - Japan's Diplomatic Strategy in the Middle East by ANDO Toshihide, Director-General, Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, MOFA
- 11:30-12:40 **Keynote Speech III** - Anti-Israel Sentiment and Global Instability by IKEUCHI Hisashi, Professor, Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, University of Tokyo
- 12:40-14:00 <Lunch Break>
- 14:00-15:00 **Keynote Speech IV** - Middle East Conflict and Major Power Engagement: The Diplomatic and Economic Strategies of the United States, China, South Korea, and India in the Middle East by Dr. Flynt LEVERETT, Director of Research, STRATEGA
- 15:00-15:50 **Country Reports (1)**
- TSUKADA Tamaki, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Iran
 - KATSUMATA Takahiko, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Türkiye
- 15:50-16:10 <Coffee Break>
- 16:10-17:50 **Country Reports (2)**
- OKA Hiroshi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Egypt
 - IWAI Fumio, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Saudi Arabia
 - ISOMATA Akio, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the UAE
 - ARAI Yusuke, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Israel
- 18:15-20:15 **Networking Session**

Day 2: August 23, 2024

07:30-09:00 **Morning Session** (to be held at each speaker's venue)

- MATSUO Takehiko, Vice-Minister for International Affairs, METI
- ISOMATA Akio, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the UAE
- TSUKADA Tamaki, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Iran
- OKA Hiroshi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Egypt
- IWAI Fumio, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Saudi Arabia
- KATSUMATA Takahiko, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Türkiye

09:30-10:30 **Lecture I** – Environmental Change in the Global Energy Landscape and Its Future Outlook by SADAMORI Keisuke, Director of Energy Markets and Security, IEA

10:30-11:30 **Lecture II** – Impact of the Gaza Conflict on the Political Structures in the Middle East and Future Scenarios by NAKAMURA Satoru, Professor, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University

11:30-11:45 <Coffee Break>

11:45-12:30 **Lecture III** – Japanese Companies and Supply Chains under Uncertain Commodity Market by AMANO Tatsushi, Head of Resource Finance Department, JBIC

12:30-13:45 <Lunch Break>

13:45-15:35 **Business Reports**

- [UAE] KATSUDA Motoki, Managing Director, Abu Dhabi, ITOCHU Middle East Company
- [Oman] NAMIKI Shingo, General Manager, Representative in Oman, Marubeni Corporation
- [Saudi Arabia] YOSHIDA Kazutomo, CEO, SMBC Advisory Services Saudi Arabia LLC
- [Türkiye] FUJII Shunsuke, CFO, Istanbul PPP Sağlık Yatırım A.Ş., Sojitz Corporation
- [DX in the Middle East] ARAMAKI Kohei, Head of International Marketing, Monstarlab Inc.

15:35-15:50 <Coffee Break>

15:50-17:20 **Panel Discussion:**

Changes in Arabic and Iranian Diplomatic Strategies Towards Israel and Business Strategies of Japanese Companies

- Moderator

IKEUCHI Hisashi, Professor, Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, University of Tokyo

- Panelists

WATANABE Masashi, Director, Middle East and Africa Division, METI

AMANO Tatsushi, Head of Resource Finance Department, JBIC

WAKI Yuzo, Journalist

17:20-17:30 **Closing Remarks** by KODAIRA Nobuyori, President of JCCME

#