

WELCOME REMARKS FOR OAP 25TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

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Finance Minister Suzuki, Managing Director **Georgieva**, Friends of IMF, and Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honor to welcome you this morning. We are extremely pleased to be able to hold this celebration in a hybrid mode including a real in-person gathering today to mark the 25th Anniversary of the IMF Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, OAP, here in Tokyo, OAP's home.

Let me extend a warm welcome to everyone joining today's roundtable event—**"25 Years On: Strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation"**, with the participation of the best possible speakers in the panel. Please also allow me to express heart felt gratitude to **Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki** and **IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva** for honoring today's special event by kindly offering their opening remarks.

This roundtable event exhibits several qualities that highlight the strong cooperation between Japan and the IMF, and countries throughout the Asia and Pacific region. I would like to **highlight two of these qualities**.

First, today's discussion will look forward to the opportunities and challenges in Asia and the Pacific while drawing on our experience and lessons from the past twenty-five years to strengthen regional and global economic cooperation. In doing so, **it will carry forward OAP's role of facilitating two-way communication between the Region and the IMF**. This ongoing dialogue is critical to ensuring that the region's perspectives and voices are well-communicated to the IMF, which enriches the diversity of viewpoints in the Fund and enhances the Fund's relevance for regional and global issues. In turn, such dialogues allow the IMF to offer useful research results, and communicate effectively to the authorities and the public in the region its views on policies and reforms that will help foster inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity while maintaining financial stability.

The participation in today's event **highlights another major contribution of Japan, IMF, and OAP to the region, which is capacity development**. We are very fortunate to have with us today current scholars from the Japan-IMF Scholarship Program for Asia,

or JISPA. This program, a crown jewel of our office, has been generously funded by the government of Japan, and it provides opportunities for young officials from the region to study graduate economics in Japan so that they can contribute to their own country's development and to economic cooperation in Asia Pacific, and beyond. We extend a heartfelt welcome to all of the JISPA scholars who are with us today and warm greetings to the network of more than 800 JISPA alumni throughout the region.

Once again, thank you very much to everyone here for joining us today and for making this anniversary event successful.

I now have the honor to invite Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki to make his opening remarks.