

Five years since the issuance of the Arbitral Tribunal's award as to the disputes between
the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China
regarding the South China Sea
(Statement by Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu)

1. Today, on July 12, 2021, five years have passed since the issuance of the Arbitral Tribunal's award as to the disputes between the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China regarding the South China Sea. As the Tribunal's award is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute under the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the parties to this case, the Philippines and China, are required to comply with the award. The claim by China that it will not accept the award is against the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law, in particular UNCLOS, and undermines the rule of law as a fundamental value of the international community. Japan strongly hopes that the parties' compliance with the award will lead to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea.

2. Japan highly appreciates the Philippines' renewed commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea in accordance with the award as shown by the statement by President Duterte at the UN General Assembly in September 2020 and the recent statement of Secretary of Foreign Affairs Locsin issued in June 2021 regarding the award.

3. Given the universality and comprehensiveness of UNCLOS, all maritime claims must be based on the relevant provisions of UNCLOS. Japan renews its objection to maritime claims in the South China Sea that are inconsistent with UNCLOS and remains seriously concerned about the current situation. Furthermore, Japan reiterates its strong opposition to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion.

4. Japan will continue working in coordination with ASEAN and other countries concerned to maintain and strengthen the maritime order based on the rule of law, and to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific.