

July 28th 2016

Dear Friends,

I hope this finds you well.

As some of you may already know, last week, Japan, Australia and the United States held the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue for the first time in 3 years. It was the 6th meeting of its kind and was attended by the Foreign Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Julie Bishop and U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry. A Joint Statement was released after the meeting and I have attached a copy for your information ([Text of the Joint Statement](#)).

Much has been said and covered by the press on the discourse over the South China Sea, both among the ASEAN countries and with others who have a vested interest in the region. I hope you find reading the Joint Statement firsthand provides the context to which allows you to form your own opinion on these issues.

While the Joint Statement speaks for itself, I do wish to take this opportunity to reiterate that regarding the South China Sea, **Japan has consistently advocated the importance of the rule of law and the use of**

peaceful means, not the use of force or coercion, in seeking settlement of maritime disputes. It is also the case that as the Tribunal's award is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute under the provisions of UNCLOS, the parties to this case are required to comply with the award, and that we strongly expect that the parties' compliance with this award will eventually lead to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea.

As countries that share common values and a responsibility on how to bring about a prosperous future for the Asia-Pacific, I wish to renew my belief that Japan-Australia relations are vital and as well as my commitment to strengthen our relationship for the future of our region.

As always, I welcome your thoughts.

Yours sincerely,

/S/

Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia