

Remarks by Ambassador Kusaka
at the 18th Annual Dinner for the Institute For Regional Security
18 October 2016

Thank you for inviting me to speak tonight. It is an honour to be here along with Minister Bishop and such distinguished guests.

Time flies and it has been just over a year ago since I was first invited to speak here. I have to say, during the past year I have been pleasantly surprised to witness and tangibly feel the progress made in the Japan-Australia relationship. Just last week here in Canberra, we celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between Japan and Australia in a reception at the Parliament House, to which Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and many other guests attended.

It's a world apart from when I was first posted here 35 years ago from 1981 to 1983. And I am not just talking about the new Parliament House, this National Gallery and Questacon or the restaurants that I did not see here then, but the warm feeling with which Australians view their Japanese counterparts as good friends and partners in every sphere of activity from business, cultural exchanges, sports competition and so forth. Together with my wife Ikuko who spent 2 years in Sydney in the early 1970s, we are now truly comfortable here with our Australian friends. Even with the 1-1 draw in Melbourne last week for the Soccer world cup qualifier, I feel there is almost a healthy dose of competition and good companionship.

But tonight, we are here to take stock in the realm of security, and during the past 12 months our region has been eventful to say the least, and even more so globally. Just after the annual dinner last year, a new government was launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Turnbull. And Prime Minister Abe's government in Japan passed the Legislation for Peace and Security, thereby enabling Japan to take on a larger role in making a proactive contribution to peace in the international Arena.

In January this year, North Korea conducted a nuclear test, which was followed by a number of long-range missile firings, and a further nuclear test in September, which constitute a serious threat to our security. And in our neighbourhood, tensions in the

South China Sea was in constant focus throughout, with much concern over large scale land-reclamation and artificial island-building and the ensuing militarization of these islands.

Further afield, Brexit stunned not only Europe but the whole world on June 23rd, which surely will have a long lasting, deep impact in international relations and in that same month, President Duterte of the Philippines was sworn in. In July, the much anticipated ruling of the Arbitrary Tribunal between China and the Philippines was handed down. These may be developments which could influence the unity of ASEAN, and the entire region of South East Asia.

And quite recently, Australia agreed to the Force Posture Initiative with the United States. In a few weeks' time, we will also know who will be leading the most powerful country in the world, which will inevitably impact the peace and security and relations among nations in various regions.

During this time, Japan, Australia, and the United States have been very actively engaged with one another. They met amongst themselves in the form of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, or TSD, at the Ministerial Level in July in Laos, in which the Hon. Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs took part. And this was followed up by a Senior Official's Meeting on the sideline of the UN General Assembly in New York to which Ms Francis Adamson, Secretary of DFAT attended. The TSD Ministerial Meeting produced a statement, in which the Ministers reiterated the importance of upholding the rules-based maritime order, respect for freedom of navigation and overflight, as well as expressing their serious concerns over maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

The ministers of the three countries also voiced their strong opposition to any coercive unilateral actions and urged all states to refrain from such actions as large-scale land reclamation, and the construction of outposts as well as the use of those outposts for military purposes. Also important was that the three ministers expressed their strong support for the rule of law and called on China and the Philippines to abide by the Arbitral Tribunal's Award of July 12 in the Philippines-China arbitration, which is final and legally binding on both parties.

We may not have anticipated such major developments a year ago, so we should not be surprised if equally seismic events await us in the forthcoming year.

We are the stability and the bedrock for peace and stability in the region. And being the steady force in the region has become all the more important. There are many indications that the existing international order around the world is under a lot of stress. With the EU – we had Brexit. All around the world, there is a lack of appetite to embrace further freedom of movement – maybe it is not so much for goods and services or investments, but surely applies for the movement of people and migrants, which may be partly interpreted as anti-globalization.

The authority of the UN laid-down order is called into question with the repeated and serious breaches of UN Security Council Resolutions by North Korea, and a sense of helplessness in restoring peace and order in Syria. And in our own neighbourhood, many believe ASEAN is under great strain, and some may ask whether ASEAN's consensus driven model is fully capable of coping with rapid developments taking place in the South China Sea. Perhaps there has even been a general erosion or loss of faith in the existing order at large. Perhaps we should not take the current international order for granted anymore.

As we have seen in the past year, changes happen drastically and much quicker than anticipated. At least psychologically, we have to be prepared and ready. And we have to make continued conscious efforts to avoid the further erosion of order and instead to make our way towards building a more stable international environment. No country can resolve this state of affairs by itself, and should not be expected to.

Otherwise this would result in a regional order being exploited according to the principle of "might is right". At an absolute bare minimum, we need to make sure that the rule of law is upheld. In the face of these developments, it is imperative upon us - Japan, Australia and the United States - that we remain as the vanguards and the beacon in the Asia-Pacific for propagating these values of freedom and the rule of law in the way we conduct business, and persuade others to follow the proper avenue to achieve peace and prosperity.

It is incumbent upon us to stay united and keep emphasizing that there is no alternative to the rule of law. The only alternative to the rule of law is mistrust, miscalculations, misguided behaviour, all of which would likely lead to instability and confrontations which could lead to conflict. Devoid of rule of law, power will likely prevail in dashing all humble hopes for peace and justice for the smaller states. It is incumbent upon us that we collectively need and want a US presence in the region, as an anchor for stability and liberalized international order. We will keep together and

we will not be blinded by those that wish to separate us.

For Japan, its alliance with the United States and its strong defence and strategic ties with Australia is the backbone for its policy for security and stability in Asia. Upon this bedrock, Japan is making its own efforts with ASEAN to strengthen and uplift the capabilities of ASEAN countries. For example, Japan has been providing patrol vessels. It has already provided 2 new patrol vessels to the Philippine Coast Guards which will be gradually increased to 10. We have already provided 3 patrol vessels to Indonesia through grant aid cooperation, and moving forward with the necessary survey to enable to the provision of brand new vessels to Viet Nam in addition to the 6 already provided. Promoting Secretary-level talks among Japan, Australia, and India is another effort to broaden our horizon in bolstering our strategic ties in the region. And most importantly, the two leaders of Japan and China have met more than a few times in the last few years, and discussed issues of mutual interest and they agreed to work together to improve Japan-China relations while managing difficult issues.

We must not forget that while all such efforts are significant and very important to us, the bedrock of these efforts is the Japan-Australia-US relationship. We must continue to be the standard-bearers for peace and stability in the region, and we must keep abreast of making sure that the rule of law, and the liberal international order of freedom and democracy stay as the basis of our interaction in our neighbourhood.

There is a proper logic and reason to this. It's not a marriage of convenience.

It's a conviction based on (1) shared values, (2) common interest and (3) mutual trust. - and I think its safe to say we are headed in the right direction, in that we are strengthening defence and security cooperation between Japan, the US and Australia. The recent Force Posture Initiative agreed between Australia and the US is a very welcome development. And so was the updated defence guidelines between Japan and the U.S. which improves the effectiveness of Japan-US defence cooperation. The review of the Japan-US Access and Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, or ACSA, will also better coordinate efforts between Japan and the US. All such examples attest to the will of constantly reviewing and strengthening the relationship. All three sides of the triangle are a vital component to our shared future and there needs to be a conscious and concerted effort to reinforce this triangle.

In this regard, while there is no room for complacency, I am genuinely pleased with

the advances made in defence cooperation between Japan and Australia. Here, I must admit that personal ties have helped bolster and promote the status of the Japan-Australia relationship, including those between Foreign Minister Bishop and Foreign Minister Kishida who have already met 13 times in their capacity as Foreign Ministers. This year alone, they have met a total of 3 times. Prime Minister Turnbull has also met Prime Minister Abe 3 times since assuming the role of Prime Minister one year ago. And Defence Minister Payne was quick in visiting Japan and establishing a good working relationship with Japanese Defence Minister Inada.

In fact, in terms of developing our defence and security with Australia, Japan is all in. Our Embassy is now one of the few Japanese Embassies around the world which enjoys representatives from all three services. While it is true that the submarine bid submerged “with our hearts temporarily”, we are steadfastly here for more, and we are committed to developing this security and defence relationship here in Australia. This will not reverse. It can only go up. With such help from the top, defence relations between our two countries have gained due recognition from both sides from top to bottom and there is a steady momentum behind our defence cooperation. I also want to take this opportunity to salute the truly hard work that has gone into enhancing our defence relationship.

The Chiefs of Staff of all 3 services and the Joint Staff have frequently visited each other’s countries and joint exercises have expanded both in terms of size of participating forces and frequency. That the Japanese Ground Self-Defence Force was involved for the first time in the US-Australia joint exercise “Talisman Sabre” last year illustrates this point very well. As our forces are doing more exercises in both of our countries, we are making substantial progress in negotiations towards making an agreement that will reciprocally improve administrative, policy and legal procedures to facilitate joint operations and exercises(RAA) – a development I welcome very much.

I must add at this juncture that Japan is very grateful that the Australian forces took a risk concerning their legal status and put their hearts first in coming to help the Japanese in the aftermath of the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011. The RAA (Reciprocal Access Agreement) should alleviate future incidents as well in situations where the Australian Defence Forces come to Japan. I am also happy to inform you that we are in the process of negotiating a review of our Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with Australia to enable more cooperation in overseas peace-keeping operations. The new ACSA should also help our joint cooperative assistance, such as the ones we did in the disaster relief operations following

Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, and Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu.

Despite the fact that Japan might have to overcome Australia to make it to the 2018 World Cup, it remains my strong view that -the Japan-Australia-US triangle is the key to the future of peace and stability in our neighbourhood. There is no room for complacency, and I look forward to talking with you vigorously at the conference to exchange views frankly and find a good path forward for our common future.

Thank you.