

20 January 2017

Dear Friends,

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's last week visit to Australia kicked off Japan-Australia relations for 2017. This visit was a success with excellent outcomes from the leaders' meeting, the productive schedule, and the wide media coverage resulting in an even stronger 'special strategic partnership' between our two countries. Furthermore, both prime ministers cemented a close personal relationship based on trust. (You can find the Joint Meeting Outcomes on [Prime Minister of Australia's website](#).)

Please allow me to take this opportunity to share with you a summary of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Sydney over January 13th - 15th as part of his 4-country tour across Southeast Asia and Australia.

On Saturday the 14th of January at Kirribilli House for approximately 90 minutes, Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Turnbull held discussions on a number of topics highlighting the depth and breadth of Japan and Australia's relationship.

Both leaders affirmed that Japan and Australia's respective security alliances with the United States are of importance for regional stability and prosperity. In this context, both leaders confirmed Japan and Australia will continue to work together proactively to maintain the rules-based international order and support a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, both prime ministers share serious concern over the situation in the South China Sea and urged all parties concerned to exercise self-restraint, avoid actions that would escalate tensions, and resolve disputes peacefully. The two leaders reiterated their opposition to any unilateral or coercive actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions in the East China Sea. Moreover, Prime Ministers Abe and Turnbull condemned in the strongest terms North Korea's continued nuclear tests and multiple ballistic missile

launches and urged North Korea to desist. They also strongly urged North Korea to end its human rights violations and resolve the abductions issue immediately.

In pursuing deeper defence cooperation, the prime ministers witnessed the signing of a new Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), and expressed their expectation of concluding negotiations as early as feasible, preferably in 2017, on an agreement to reciprocally improve administrative, policy and legal procedures to facilitate operations and exercises.

Japan and Australia are strongly committed to an open global trading environment. To this end, the two leaders stressed the success of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEPA), which came into effect two years ago, and the indispensable priority of implementing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Furthermore on this occasion, the two leaders welcomed the signing of a memorandum of cooperation on innovation. Additionally, a Japanese business delegation accompanied Prime Minister Abe and held a tourism seminar and business dialogue with their Australian counterparts as well as attending the reception hosted by Prime Minister Turnbull and Mrs Turnbull, and the dinner hosted by the Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee and its partner organisation, the Japan Australia Business Co-operation Committee. Members of the delegation had the opportunity to meet with a number of people of importance, such as Premier of New South Wales, Mr Mike Baird, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Julie Bishop, Cabinet Secretary, Mr Arthur Sinodinos, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Mr Steven Ciobo, and former prime minister, Mr John Howard,. As such, the delegation were able to expand the scope of economic relations between our two countries.

In addition to acknowledging the importance of exchange between researchers and universities and expanding personal ties between our two nations, Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Turnbull welcomed the signing of a memorandum of cooperation on sports exchange. The prime ministers also supported the signing of

memoranda of cooperation on agriculture and tourism, reflecting the depth and diversity of our bilateral relationship at all levels of government.

I would like to give a special mention to the wide media coverage of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Australia. The significance and success of his visit was widely written about in major newspapers, and footage of the prime ministers' walk together along the shore of Sydney Harbour and joint press conference was often repeated on Australian television. Thanks to the wide media coverage, I firmly believe that the great significance as well as an overview of this visit by Prime Minister Abe was widely shared with the Australian people.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Japan-Australia Agreement on Commerce, which built the foundations of our bilateral economic relationship, as well as the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, which has facilitated security cooperation between our two countries. With Prime Minister Abe's visit in a year celebrating these two milestones, 2017 is off to a promising start for Japan-Australia relations. I appreciate everyone's cooperation in taking Prime Minister Abe's visit as an opportunity to further strengthen the relations enjoyed by our two countries.

Prime Minister Abe's visit to Australia was preceded and followed by visits to the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. Through the series of leaders meetings, each nation confirmed the necessity of the United States' commitment to regional peace and stability, maritime security, and the freedom of navigation, the importance of the rule of law and the indispensable priority of implementing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In this regard, Japan and these countries committed to continuing closer cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

/S/

Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia