

28 April 2017

Dear friends,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

Last week I returned to Japan to attend the Seventh Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations in Tokyo on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April where Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Fumio Kishida and Minister of Defense of Japan, Ms. Tomomi Inada met with their Australian counterparts, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Julie Bishop and Australian Minister for Defence, Senator Marise Payne. I would like to share the outcomes of these meetings with you. ([joint statement](#))

2017 marked the seventh time the 2+2 meetings have been held between Japan and Australia. Our Ministers engaged in a frank exchange of views regarding the pressing security issues that our two countries currently face, such as maritime security and North Korea. The strengthening of Japan and Australia's defence and security cooperation to combat the issues we confront as well as further deepening our special strategic partnership could not come at a more timely or significant time.

In the 2+2 meetings, the Ministers underlined the importance of ensuring a stable, free and open rules-based order across the Indo-Pacific region. The Australian side expressed its support for Japan's greater engagement in the region under its 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy'. The points discussed were included in a joint statement issued upon the conclusion of the meetings.

#### *Bilateral and Trilateral Security and Defence Cooperation*

Marking the tenth anniversary of the 2007 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, the Ministers renewed their determination to strengthen security cooperation. They welcomed increased cooperation in the areas of training and exercises, personnel exchanges, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security, peacekeeping, capacity building, and defence equipment and technology.

The Ministers welcomed the progress in their respective internal procedures

necessary for the entry into force of the new Japan-Australia Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement, signed on the 14 January 2017, which will facilitate greater logistical support between the Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Australian Defence Force. They acknowledged positive progress in negotiations towards an agreement to reciprocally improve administrative, policy and legal procedures to facilitate joint operations and exercises, and reiterated the expectation expressed by Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Turnbull in January 2017 that negotiations be concluded as early as feasible, preferably in 2017.

#### Regional and International Issues

The Ministers reiterated their condemnation in the strongest terms of North Korea's nuclear tests, multiple ballistic missile launches and proliferation activities. In the meetings, the Japan side stated that North Korea is a 'new level of threat' and supports the U.S.' 'all options are on the table' stance. Both sides openly discussed ways to stop the provocative actions by North Korea and encourage them to honour their commitments and international obligations, including U.N. Security Council resolutions, and confirmed the importance of China's role in dealing with North Korea. They strongly urged North Korea to end its human rights violations, to resolve the abductions issue immediately, and to focus on the great unmet needs of the people of North Korea.

Regarding the South China Sea, the Ministers also expressed their opposition to the use of disputed features for military purposes and urged all parties to pursue the demilitarisation of such features. They reaffirmed the importance of the 1982 United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and urged relevant states to make and clarify territorial and maritime claims based on international law. The Ministers called on parties on disputes in the South China Sea to refrain from using force or coercion in trying to advance such claims, and to seek to settle disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law. Furthermore, Japan and Australia confirmed the continuing of close cooperation and communication, and expressed their opposition to any unilateral or coercive behavior to change the status quo or escalate tension in the East China Sea.

*Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers Meeting*

Also on 20 April, Minister Kishida held the Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers Meeting with Minister Bishop. In this meeting, the Ministers agreed on the further strengthening of cooperation between Japan, Australia and the U.S. as well as confirming the importance of the U.S.' role in the peace, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, they acknowledged the importance of India in the region and agreed to work towards strengthening cooperation between Japan, Australia and India. I also attended this meeting between the Ministers and as someone whose role is to work tirelessly to deepen the relationship between our two countries, I could tell the Ministers were on the same wavelength and I was greatly impressed by their candid discussion.

In keeping with the discussions between our Ministers at the 2+2 meetings, I will endeavour to work with my Australian government counterparts in Canberra to further strengthen defence and security cooperation between our two countries.

Yours Sincerely,

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Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia