

22 Sep 2017

Dear friends,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

I recently had the honour of speaking at the Institute for Regional Affairs (IFRS) Annual Dinner on the 14th of September. It was a wonderful dinner, with an impressive audience composed of senior policy makers, opinion leaders and experts in Japan-Australia-U.S. trilateral relations, and I was most thrilled to have the opportunity to speak along with Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, Attorney-General for Australia, Mr James Carouso, Charge d'Affairs of the U.S. Embassy and Air Chief Marshall Mark Binskin, AC, Chief of the Defence Force. In fact, the ensuing discussions in Bowral was equally intriguing and stimulating as to how we should pursue a path towards peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Those who attended will surely agree with me that it was a splendid dinner in terms of substance and the exchange of thoughts. I took the opportunity to discuss Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' - it's thinking, and what lies ahead in terms of its challenges. It has long been said that the 21st Century will be about the prosperity of Asia and its surrounding regions. Japan seeks to foster a confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa to create a place where the values of freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy make it prosperous and free from force or coercion.

The prosperity and security that the Indo-Pacific has enjoyed for over half a century has relied upon the agreement among states to act according to international law and avoid aggressive actions that disturb the existing international order. Yet, we are witnessing many disturbing challenges to the region, not least by the recent nuclear and ballistic missile tests by North Korea. It is imperative that international law is not flouted, and unilateral action to change the existing international order is not condoned. The rules-based international order is the bedrock of our peace and prosperity and we need to buttress it. Japan will play a constructive role for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific. As Prime Minister Abe declared at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit last year in May, Japan has set a target of

providing \$200 billion over the next 5 years for the infrastructure of the region as well as elsewhere.

I also took the opportunity to touch upon the continued and blatantly provocative acts by North Korea. It's time for the international community to jointly put the strongest possible pressure on North Korea and the tough U.N. Security Council sanctions, including the recent UNSCR 2375, must be enforced in full by all nations.

On the economic front, the potential economic and geopolitical significance of the original TPP is too important to merely cast aside. So Japan, together with Australia and other like-minded nations, has been working hard to realise the benefits of the TPP and hopes to achieve a solid outcome at the APEC Leaders' Meeting this November. While the U.S.' withdrawal was disappointing, we believe if we can progress towards an outcome of the TPP11, this will provide a strong incentive for the U.S. to return to the agreement.

Japan also recognises that the Indian Ocean will be the next area in which it must concentrate its attention in order to safeguard its future. It suffices to say that Japan, Australia, the U.S. and India need each other now more than ever at a time of international uncertainty, and we have the tools in place to create a strong and long-lasting relationship that will withstand the challenges thrown at us. As Ambassador to Australia, I will endeavour to promote mutual understanding on a variety of issues and take every opportunity to have strategic dialogue with policy makers, academics and experts from countries in the region that support Japan's resolution to further contribute to regional peace, stability and prosperity.

Yours sincerely,

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Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia