

Ambassador's Message No.55
(Japanese Diplomacy at APEC/EAS)

24 November 2017

Dear friends,

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

In this message I would like to share my thoughts in regard to two important international meetings in the Asia-Pacific region that took place this month that were both attended by leaders in the region, and outline the results of various meetings and leaders' dialogues involving Prime Minister Abe that took place, including those with Australia.

The Japan-Australia, and Japan-Australia-US leaders' dialogues at APEC/EAS

At the recent APEC (6-11 November, Vietnam) and East Asia Summit (EAS, 13-14 November, The Philippines), Prime Minister Abe continued to strongly advocate for the cause of diplomacy in the region. In addition to his meeting with Prime Minister Turnbull, Prime Minister Abe engaged in bilateral dialogues with ASEAN chair The Philippines, China, and India, and participated in the Japan-Australia-US leaders' trilateral dialogue. Prime Minister Abe exchanged opinions on bilateral relations and on the current international and regional environment. In relation to Japan-Australia relations, conversations between our leaders took place at the Foreign Minister's Dinner at APEC and on the sidelines of the EAS. As Ambassador, I was greatly satisfied to learn that Foreign Ministers Kono and Bishop, and Prime Ministers Abe and Turnbull were able to have a direct exchange of opinions and further strengthen the trust between the leadership of both countries.



The strong impression that I received from the bilateral dialogues between Japan and Australia at APEC and the EAS was that Japan and Australia, while continuing to co-operate for the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, have further strengthened their diplomatic ties and thus the importance of the Japan-Australia relationship to regional order has grown significantly. As Ambassador, I feel that the bilateral dialogues between Japan and Australia were of deep significance. The trilateral dialogue was the first time in 3 years, since 2014 in Brisbane, that a leaders' dialogue has taken place between Japan, Australia, and the US.



Moreover, Japan, Australia, India, and the US took part in discussions at the official level on the 12th of November regarding measures to secure a free and open international order based upon the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region.

The problem of North Korea's nuclear missiles

Prime Minister Abe, in relation to the problems of North Korea's nuclear program and missiles, had a frank exchange of opinions separately with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin. All agreed on the need to closely assess the effect of sanctions on North Korea. Prime Minister Abe advocated the need for a commitment to force North Korea to completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandon its nuclear and missile programs. In his conversations with the leaders of many countries and at the EAS, Prime Minister Abe strongly advocated for the maximum amount of pressure to be applied to North Korea to create a situation whereby North Korea will willingly engage in dialogue.

A “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”

At the APEC CEO Summit, US President Trump gave a speech in relation to a “free and open Indo-Pacific”. As Japan’s Ambassador to Australia, I strongly felt that this speech expressed the clear commitment of the United States to this region. The concept of “Indo-Pacific” was originally used by the Australian Government, however the Government of Japan, as an essential diplomatic strategy for the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific region, and in order to continue and strengthen a free and open maritime order based upon the rule of law, as well as to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is not divided up by any one country but exists as an international public good to bring about peace and prosperity, has been actively promoting a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”.

In Japan’s view, if a consensus can be reached on this, it can involve cooperation with a range of countries including China. As a means to achieve this, this policy will involve the establishment of basic values such as freedom of navigation and the rule of law, and will further cooperation for the sake of peace and stability through constructive support for the enforcement of maritime law as well as humanitarian and disaster relief activities.

Agreement in principle reached on the TPP

On the economic front, a major development we have recently witnessed was the agreement in principle reached on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The agreement was arrived at the ministerial level on the margins of APEC meetings held in Da Nang, Vietnam, on the 10th and 11th of November.

While some work remains before a final outcome is realised on the TPP, cooperation between Japan and Australia has been instrumental in driving the very substantial progress we have witnessed on the TPP since the U.S. determined to withdraw from the agreement earlier in the year. In this connection, I think the governments of Japan and Australia can be very proud of what we have achieved so far together.

The agreement in principle is significant in three key respects. These are, namely: (1) rapid progress was made towards reaching the agreement; (2) the 11 members have committed to preserving the high standards agreed to under the original TPP; and (3) the 11 nations have agreed to bring about a balanced outcome.

The agreement in principle is a crucial step towards bringing into effect 21st Century rules and standards that will promote liberal and fair trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region. I hope and trust that the agreement will help to pave the way towards the establishment of an even broader Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) over the

longer term, while also generating further momentum for other trade negotiations Japan is currently engaged in.

Moving ahead, the Government of Japan will continue to exert every effort to strengthen the peace, stability and economic underpinnings of the Asia-Pacific. As Ambassador, I greatly look forward to continuing to work with my counterparts in the Australian Government to build on the momentous diplomatic achievements we have reached together, while also cooperating closely to further advance the invaluable ties of our two nations.

Yours sincerely,

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Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia