

Ambassador Kusaka's Message No.68

***The Indo-Pacific: Strategic Implications and Challenges***

*(Attending IFRS Annual Dinner 2018)*

2 October 2018

Dear Friends,

I hope this email finds you well.

Once again this year, I had the honour of speaking at the Institute for Regional Affairs (IFRS) Annual Dinner. The opportunity on 6<sup>th</sup> of September was an inspiring occasion with an impressive audience composed of senior policy makers, opinion leaders and experts in Japan-Australia-U.S. trilateral relations. This event has always been a great opportunity for us to engage in strategic discussions and remind ourselves that we should maintain a bird's eye view when conducting our day-to-day diplomatic activities.



Ambassador Kusaka delivering a speech

The need for strategic discussions has never been greater and will be even greater in the coming years, as we witness a challenge to the existing liberal international order. Thinking through how to navigate these uncharted waters is of urgent importance given the speed of change.

The Indo-Pacific region is the most dynamic and prosperous region full of opportunities. Since the beginning of this century, the region has witnessed the emergence of economic powers that have transformed global trade, leading to a greater distribution of wealth for the people of the region.

At the same time, the Indo-Pacific region is faced with challenges in both the short and long-term; economic activity in the region has led to a surge in demand for infrastructure development. We must improve our security outlook regarding North Korea and the South China Sea, and reinforce a rules-based international order among all regional players in the region, large or small.

It is in this environment that Japan has embarked on its Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy to strengthen the rules-based order as well as promote economic prosperity. The strategy is based on three pillars – 1) Promote the rule of law in the region; 2) Promote economic prosperity through quality infrastructure development and enhanced economic partnerships; 3) Develop individual or collective capacity to address security issues in areas such as maritime law enforcement and disaster prevention.

To achieve the objectives of the strategy, we intend to work with any and all in the region who subscribe to our ideas, and will advance this strategy in a transparent and inclusive manner as it is not intended to counter anyone.

Throughout the strategy, Australia is an indispensable partner for Japan. We have been strong advocates of the rule of law in regional fora such as the ARF and the EAS, as well as working together in the pursuit of economic prosperity. We also launched, together with the US, a trilateral partnership for infrastructure investment in the Indo-Pacific, an initiative that will provide a responsible platform for sustainable investment.

Japan and Australia, as long-time allies of the US, must work hard to ensure that the alliance system remains effective and try to strengthen the partnership even further. For the foreseeable future, a rules-based order and the US alliance system will be indispensable to each other.

I look forward to contributing to further strengthening strategic partnership by enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Yours sincerely,

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Sumio Kusaka

Ambassador of Japan to Australia