

AIIA Brisbane Branch Panel Discussion Event Speech

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“The Current Situation of the Indo-Pacific, and the Importance of Future Cooperation between Japan and Australia in the Region”

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E&OE

1. Introduction

- Before I begin, I do want to thank the AIIA Queensland Branch for providing the opportunity to discuss with you tonight the regional situation and how Japan and Australia’s relationship is evolving in response to it.
- As you can see by me coming to you over the internet, COVID has certainly been providing many challenges to conducting diplomacy.
- I was very fortunate to be able to travel around Australia before the lockdowns were in place and very much enjoyed my previous visit to the Sunshine State.
- Unfortunately I won’t be able to ‘sink a tinny of Gold’ with you in person tonight, but I hope what I say will prove entertaining and fuel for an interesting discussion afterwards.

2. The Japan-Queensland Relationship

- First, I want to talk a little bit about the Japan-Queensland relationship.
- Allow me to offer my congratulations to Brisbane for its selection as the venue for the 2032 Olympic Games. The announcement came just before the Tokyo 2020 Games commenced.
- And what a Games it was. For Australia it was one of your most successful appearances ever, with Queensland swimmers contributing much to your 'Gold rush'.
- While watching the Games, I realized that Japan and Australia have complementary strengths. Sportsmanship and the idea of a 'fair go' are two distinguishing features of our representatives, and these were on full display throughout the Games.
- So it is fitting that I should address the AIIA Queensland branch tonight, for it is the state where the Japan-Australia relationship really began.
- 125 years ago, Japan established its first diplomatic mission in Australia in Townsville. Since then Queensland has been a magnet for Japanese investment and migration.
- From Port Douglas to Mount Isa to Coolangatta, Japan and its citizens have contributed to the development of Queensland, its society and its economy.

- Japan is Queensland's second largest trading partner, with diverse links from agriculture and mining, to education, professional services, and, hopefully again in the not-too-distant future, tourism.
- We have a good symbiotic relationship, and long may it continue. In the meantime we have a bit of work to do to get things back on track.

3. Overcoming the pandemic and forging economic resilience for the future

- For starters, there's a global pandemic to overcome and economic resilience to build for the future.
- For Japan and Australia, and the region and global community as a whole, the greatest challenge that immediately lies in front of us is the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Populations and economies all over the world have been hit hard by this pandemic. It has separated individuals, families, communities, and even entire countries from one another.
- While our strategies have differed, both Japan and Australia have tried to do everything to respond to the virus.
- With the vaccine rollout in both countries progressing, the possibility of a resumption in travel between both countries is becoming more viable.

- Since my arrival in Australia, I have heard from numerous voices from the Japanese and Australian businesses communities asking when travel can resume and when regular business transactions recommence.
- I can assure you that Japan and Australia are committed to re-opening two-way travel once it becomes feasible to do so.
- After all, we miss our Aussie visitors. You are the largest spenders of any foreign tourists to visit Japan, and you also stay longer than the average visit.
- Meanwhile Japan and Australia are working in conjunction to assist our region in recovering from the pandemic by providing access to vaccines.
- As was decided during the Quad Leaders' Summit Meeting in March this year, Japan and Australia, together with the United States and India, will assist our neighbours through the provision of one billion doses of vaccines.
- At the Gavi COVAX summit co-hosted by Japan in June this year, Japan and Australia made significant financial commitments to allow COVAX to obtain 1.8 billion doses of vaccines for distribution to lower income countries.
- Another thing that both of our countries have been doing is supporting a transparent and independent analysis and evaluation, free from interference and undue influence, of the origins of COVID.

- We have both appealed to the WHO to re-open its investigation, knowing full well that the potential for a similar virus to wreak havoc in the future is a threat that no one can or should accept.
- The primary purpose of this investigation is to provide scientific proof for future research. It is in everybody's interests to work with the WHO to prevent another global health crisis.
- Obviously, just speaking on this subject should never justify the imposition of trade restrictions aimed at Australian exporters.
- This provides a stark reminder of the importance of diversification in trade relations and the need for economic resilience.
- It has also demonstrated how important the rules-based order is to maintaining prosperity and security.
- Japan fully understands the challenge presented by economic coercion. We were previously involved in a dispute settlement in the WTO driven by unwarranted restrictions on Japan's rare earths imports. This ultimately led us to diversify our trade relationships.
- We were grateful for the support we received from Australia in response to this coercion, particularly that provided by the Lynas Corporation.

- We stick by our mates, so we have lent our weight to your case in the WTO concerning barley exports.
- Our leaders, when they met in Tokyo in November last year, reinforced the necessity of the rules-based order when they declared that ‘trade should never be used as a tool to apply political pressure’.
- In my speech to the National Press Club in July, I applauded how Australia was standing up to the pressures being placed upon it in a consistent, principled and resilient manner. I stand by those words.
- And as then, I say to you now – Australia is not walking alone.
- In fact, this is an ideal time to build our trade and investment ties to safeguard our economies in the future. Japanese technical expertise in infrastructure building can take Australia’s reputation for liveability to new heights.
- High-speed rail can be a reality for Australia, and Japan can help Australia to realise it. Queensland will benefit significantly through high-speed rail links to the wealth and human capital of the southern states.
- What we can also do is continue to pursue trade liberalisation and the establishment of fair, transparent rules for trade.

- We have a history of working together to promote regional economic integration. We were partners in the establishment of APEC, and we worked closely to ensure that the CPTPP entered into force.
- We have also been working together on the implementation of RCEP, making sure that it reflects a high quality of trade liberalization and rules-making.
- The time is now ripe for us to continue our work. We can work to expand the scope of the CPTPP, for many of our partners in the region, Thailand and Taiwan among them, are already voicing their interest in joining.
- We're already co-operating with the CPTPP Working Group as chair and vice-chair examining the accession of the UK into the Partnership. Now there's a scenario that previous generations could never have imagined.
- We can also do more together within the OECD. In this task, we have been greatly aided by the appointment of Mathias Cormann as Secretary-General.
- This will add strength to our push for positive multilateral co-operation. This includes our shared interest in reforming the WTO, and the dispute settlement mechanism in particular.

4. The Rules-Based International Order and How to Protect It

- Make no mistake about it. We are in for some tough challenges ahead, both economically and strategically.
- Even before the appearance of COVID-19, we were already facing the reality of the rise of emerging powers and all of the geopolitical waves that this creates.
- In case of Japan, these challenges have especially come in the form of intrusions into its territorial waters.
- For Australia, they have taken on a more insidious form, with influence operations against politicians and political parties.
- We are frontline states in the emerging contest in the Indo-Pacific region. We must respond to attempts to unilaterally change the rules-based international order.
- During my NPC address, I made reference to the East China Sea. This might have come as a surprise to some Australians.
- Yet even a glance at the East China Sea shows just how vital it is to our collective well-being. Five of the world's top ten busiest ports are all located in Northeast Asia, and they are all connected to shipping routes that span the globe.
- Any unilateral attempt to challenge the status quo by force or coercion will have a serious impact on our prosperity.

- The East China Sea is a lifeline for both of us. This is why it is vital for like-minded states such as Japan and Australia to work together to ensure that it remains free and open.
- We are already engaged in that process.
- RAAF aircraft and RAN ships continue to contribute to Operation ARGOS, the surveillance activities over the Sea of Japan aimed at halting illegal ship-to-ship transfers of goods to North Korean vessels in violation of UN sanctions.
- This is one activity, but there is plenty of scope for more.
- For example, Japanese Self-Defense Force vessels and Royal Australian Navy vessels have undertaken joint exercises in the South China Sea, both bilaterally and multilaterally. Japan would welcome more ADF assets in the East China Sea to conduct a wide range of exercises to maintain security and prosperity in the region
- What is crucial at this point in regional history is for like-minded states to act in unison, to enhance that most essential of strategic levers – deterrence.
- This is why it is important for us to continue to develop our interoperability both with each other and with our mutual ally, the United States of America.
- As Indo-Pacific partners, we welcome the strong and enduring presence of the United States in this region.

- The evolution of our defence ties with the US are best illustrated by Exercise Talisman Sabre, held up in Townsville and Rockhampton and other places in Northern Australia this year.
- Defence Minister Peter Dutton and I also participated in the Opening Ceremony.
- Although it was on a smaller scale than previous years, the fact that we had 17,000 personnel from various countries taking part as either direct participants or observers and in spite of a global pandemic was very impressive.
- Japan sent both Ground Self Defense Force and Maritime Self Defense Force equipment and personnel to this year's exercise, and we hope to expand the SDF presence more in future Talisman Sabre exercises.
- The involvement of the SDF in this exercise is an indication of how actively we have sought to build our strategic relationship over the past 10 years.
- All three of our services now participate in annual and biennial bilateral and multilateral exercises, be it Southern Jackaroo, Kakadu, Nichigo Trident, or Pitch Black.
- We have also expanded our ties with our regional partners. Just last month the naval forces of Japan, Australia, the US and India were engaged in Exercise Malabar in the seas off Guam.

- This is in addition to other naval exercises we have recently held together with the US, France and South Korea.
- 15 years after the signing of our Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, we are ready to move to the next level in our security ties.
- This is why we have entered the final stage in negotiations for our Reciprocal Access Agreement.
- I can assure you – this is a momentous document. Its entry into force will turbo charge our already close Defence relationship.
- It will also mark an historic milestone for Japan. This will be Japan's first Visiting-Forces type agreement, in addition to the existing Status of Forces Agreement with the United States.
- With Australia as the first partner to make such an agreement with Japan, it will further solidify Australia as a core Defence partner for Japan.
- It will open the way for more exercises, more exchanges, more information sharing, and more capability development.
- This will go a very long way to helping us protect the rules-based order that is so vital for our collective well-being and security.
- We are on the way to achieving this milestone. Japan has already created a framework to protect ADF assets by the JSDF, as appropriate.

- This makes Australia the only nation other than the US to be given such protection by Japan. That's how much we value co-operating with Australia.
- We also continue to contribute to one another's intelligence capabilities. I speak from direct experience of this, having previously been Director-General of the Intelligence and Analysis Service of Japan's Foreign Ministry.
- Australia's intelligence agencies co-operate with their Japanese counterparts across many fields, and their capabilities are appreciated by just about everyone who has worked in the intelligence sector.
- In the meantime Japan continues to build specific blocks of co-operation with Australia and with other Five Eyes members.

5. Working with Partners

- The fact is we need the help of others. And this is where Japan and Australia's activities in regional and international networks and frameworks come into play.
- First and foremost among these is the Quad.
- As I outlined in my address to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee last month, the Quad is a vehicle to promote our shared vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

- All of us, Japan, Australia, the US and India, are committed to pursuing initiatives aimed at reinforcing the rules-based regional order and the development of our region.
- And as revealed by the Joint Statement following the Leaders' Summit in March, we have established working groups committed to vaccine distribution and the post-COVID recovery, critical technology, and responding to and adapting to climate change.
- While working together, each of the Quad partners is also addressing the need for closer ties with other partners.
- For example, Japan has been very active in its engagement with ASEAN. We have already begun the Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative, which involves a focus on the on-going 2 trillion yen's worth of regional investment aimed at strengthening regional connectivity through a 'land corridor', and 'sea and air corridor' stretching across the Southeast Asian region.
- This includes projects like the Patimban Port Development Project in Indonesia, the Ho Chi Minh City Urban Railway Construction Project in Vietnam, and the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail Project in Malaysia.
- Japan has also been working closely with a Pacific Island community for many years. Japan made a pledge at the 9th PIF Leaders' Summit in June this year to provide 3 million vaccine doses to Pacific Island nations.

- The reason I bring these points up is because they compliment Australia's own initiatives in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, which Japan strongly supports.
- We are already making progress together with the United States on infrastructure projects for the Pacific, based on our Trilateral Investment Partnership. This is in addition to our individual infrastructure projects sustainably financed and made through consultation with Pacific Island governments.
- So there is plenty of scope for us to boost our co-operation in building connectivity and resilience in the Indo-Pacific.

6. Conclusion

- Ladies and gentlemen, Japan and Australia have so much to offer one another.
- We are global powers, sharing the strongest bond of all – mutual trust.
- We are both dedicated to peace, freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.
- These shared values and interests mean that we will be working together a lot more often and on a much larger scale.
- As the old saying goes “You ain't seen nothing yet”.
- And we are doing this for us, our region, and our world.