

Institute for Regional Security Dialogue 2015 Annual Dinner

(Thursday, 3 September)

“The Japan-Australia-U.S. Trilateral Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region”

Ladies and gentlemen,

- My first overseas diplomatic posting was here in Canberra from 1981 to 1983; yes, a long time ago, 34 years ago. I came to Canberra as a most junior officer from Washington D.C. after completing a two year study in an American college. After many years, once again I arrived in Canberra in April this year after serving in NY as Consul General. Some people asked me, “So what is the difference between now and then in Canberra?” In response, I would say Canberra has changed in various ways but the most impressive change for me is how much the Japan-Australia relationship has deepened and broadened.
- As I said, this is my second posting in Australia after having been posted in the U.S., so I may now be better positioned to speak about Japan-Australia-U.S. trilateral cooperation.

1. The regional environment

- Let me begin with the regional environment.
- First of all, I believe what makes this region so unique compared to Europe is the fact that there is no multilateral or collective framework such as NATO, or the EU (of Europe). Particularly when it comes to regional security, the existing bilateral alliances with the U.S. are key to peace and stability, like a hub and spoke structure, in our region.

- But then, a single and simple question comes up. Did NATO exist from the beginning? Did the EU exist from ancient times? Of course, the answer is NO. It is because France, Germany and the U.K., among others, strived to establish such order and stability so that tragedies of history are never repeated. Of course even today, they are struggling to maintain unity. Look at Ukraine. Or, look at the economic challenges related to Greece. However, fundamental peace and stability has been maintained largely because of NATO and the EU and only a few people believe that serious instability will prevail again in Europe. Of course I am not going to speak about Europe tonight, which is outside of my jurisdiction. All I wish to say is that you shouldn't take any system for granted. Everything has its own beginning.

2. Japan, Australia and the U.S. Trilateral Relationship

- Now, let me jump to my conclusion and the main point I wish to make this evening: Japan, Australia and the U.S. must work hard to maintain peace and stability in this region as a beacon. I am not saying that other countries can sit by and do nothing. We have always welcomed the peaceful rise of China, haven't we? We indeed need to engage China. A second Japan-China bilateral summit meeting was recently held in Indonesia and the bilateral relationship is continuing to improve. We hope to see once again more vibrant, friendly and cooperative political and economic relations between Japan and China emerge as we move forward.
- We also welcome the rise of India. We recently launched the Japan-Australia-India trilateral dialogue in June, which is very useful and insightful. We believe that the unity of ASEAN is very crucial. This year, Malaysia works as a chair of ASEAN and plays a key role in

hosting the recent foreign ministers' meetings, which produced good outcomes, as well as the upcoming summit meetings in November. Concerning political and security areas, we need to strengthen the role of the East Asia Summit as a premier forum. Our relationship with South Korea also continues to play a very important role which is why Japan and South Korea have made great efforts to improve relations. Notwithstanding above all, our three countries—Japan, Australia and the U.S.—have a very key role to play to maintain peace and prosperity in this region as a beacon.

- We have a lot at stake in the Asia-Pacific, which is a growth center of the world. Its peace, stability, and prosperity are of paramount importance to the international community, as well as to the countries in the region. That is why I believe in rules-based order rather than unilateral, forceful actions. Without proper guidance based on the rule of law, ongoing political and economic stability and prosperity would not likely be sustainable. There comes a certain responsibility that like-minded, advanced free market economies such as Australia, Japan and the U.S. should take on in the Asia-Pacific.
- The U.S. continues to implement its rebalance policy to the Asia-Pacific region, and it is welcomed by countries in the region. Japan and Australia are willing to work together to help the U.S. achieve this goal. As allies, our three countries should set the course and steer the way forward in the region, a region which could otherwise be destabilized as a result of various factors.
- In July, I observed the Talisman Sabre in Darwin. In all of the bilateral training exercises conducted by Australia and the U.S. until now, 40 Japan SDF personnel embedded with the U.S. forces participated in the exercises for the first time. This training exercise is something that

will not only strengthen our interoperabilities but make our three nations even closer. Furthermore, with the participation of the USS George Washington aircraft carrier, the U.S. demonstrated its visible commitment to the regional security by means of immense force.

3. Japan's own effort

- Now, let me share with you Japan's own efforts as well. At present, the Government of Japan is putting its full efforts to Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security. Simply put, it is based on the underlying belief that 'no nation alone can maintain its own peace and security'. Therefore, there is a need to further strengthen the deterrence of the Japan-U.S. alliance.
- Moreover, Japan must make a greater contribution to the international community. Once Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security is enacted, Japan will be able to cooperate more than before in various Peacekeeping Operations and activities by the United Nations. The range of activities in which Japan will be able to engage, will expand significantly. I must emphasize here, however, that there will be no change in the basic position and posture that Japan has maintained over the past 70 years as a peace committed nation. Certainly this is a manifestation of the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the policy of international cooperation, a point which Japan has been emphasizing. In this regard, please let me extend my gratitude to the Australian and U.S. Governments for strong supports to our efforts.

4. Conclusion

- Needless to say, this region's peace and stability is essential for its own economic growth. Particularly in this context, the maritime order is crucial as it encompasses a vital sea lane through which large shares of

manufactured products, and all critical commodities, are transported for Japan and Australia as well as others constantly day and night. This is also an area where many conflicted territorial waters and economic zones are claimed.

There are a number of countries which are concerned about any unilateral actions, such as large scale land reclamation, as well as the construction of facilities, which are intended to change the status quo and increase regional tensions. Our three countries have taken a common position and declared that we are all strongly opposed to the use of coercion or force to unilaterally change the status quo.

- I believe that the existing order has served as the foundation of the peace and prosperity of the region. Such principles as the rule of law, free trade, freedom of navigation and overflight must be upheld. The peace and order of the Asia-Pacific must be respected, maintained and protected by all means, because that is a foundation on which we can all thrive.
- In this context, it is important for us to give appropriate support to ASEAN countries to effectively contribute to maintaining and enhancing the security of the region's international waters and skies. We should provide them with necessary capacity building assistance. I think they are keenly watching where our three countries are headed.
- Although I understand that this dialogue's main theme is security and defense, let me also mention that we place particular importance on achieving high-standard regional economic partnerships through the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), because these two mega FTAs will provide a significant push for the Asia-Pacific. We need a strong economic engine as well to ensure regional stability and prosperity. After all, I

believe political security is intertwined with economic security.

- **I hope that the discussion from today will both highlight our common challenges and identify further areas in which we may collaborate to better shape a more desirable environment in the region.**

Thank you very much.