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Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba interview – BBC World News  
Programme: Impact

Martin Patience in Beijing introduces story with report re China conducting naval exercises in the region and that the two countries are now in a continuing stand-off.

Lucy Hockings in the studio: Well that stand-off was addressed by Japan's foreign minister Koichiro Gemba on a visit to the UK. In an interview with my colleague, Babita Sharma, he defended the government's decision to purchase the islands.

FM Gemba: Of course, as a government, we took various factors into account when we decided to buy Senkaku Islands. But that was the only pragmatic option we could take. What is important at this point is for Japan and China to prevent the situation from escalating, act calmly and always take a broader perspective on the bilateral relationship. Both countries should nurture a mutually beneficial relationship.

Babita Sharma: Can you give a reassurance to Japanese businesses and the global community that this dispute would not affect trade relations with China or your neighbours? China of course your largest trading partner.

FM Gemba: You're right, for Japan, China is the largest trading partner. Also for China, Japan has the biggest foreign direct investment and the largest number of businesses investing in China. On the issue of sovereignty, Japan cannot concede where it cannot concede, but given the interdependence and beneficial relationship that we are enjoying, we must continue to cherish it so that we can reap the benefits. To achieve that goal, both countries should maintain and reinforce communications and we must respond to the situation in a controlled, restrained and calm manner. I believe both Japan and China have a responsibility to ensure stability, prosperity and peace in the international community.