

Remarks by Mr. Nobuo Kishi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Indian Ocean Conference 2016

Good morning,

His Excellency Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali,
Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,

His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,
Former President of the Republic of Maldives,

His Excellency Mr. Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed,
Deputy Minister of Home Affairs of Malaysia

Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation for kindly inviting us to the first meeting of the "Indian Ocean Conference 2016." This meeting is made possible by the valuable collaboration by the leading think tanks in Asia.

This meeting is very timely, for it allows government policy planners engage in a frank exchange of views on how to ensure stability in the Indian Ocean.

The Indo-Pacific region is now the growth center of the global economy. Ensuring open and stable sea in the region is vital for the peace and stability of the region and the entire international community.

For Japan, the Indian Ocean was traditionally important as a sea lane for its energy import, for it transported about 90 percent of the crude oil to Japan. However, today, the Indian Ocean is playing a much important role as a sea of trade for everyone.

It is supporting all the trade transportation and value-chains among East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East and Africa, where greater economic growth is expected.

At the 6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI),

held in Kenya last weekend, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the “Free and Open India and Pacific Strategy” as Japan’s new diplomatic policy.

The key of the stability and prosperity of the international community is the dynamism created by the synergy between the “two continents” — Asia, which is recording remarkable growth, and Africa, which is full with potentials — and two free and open seas – the Pacific and the Indian Oceans.

By regarding these continents and seas as an integrated region, Japan intends to open up a new frontier of Japanese diplomacy.

The ASEAN countries, including Singapore where we are today, are located where the two Oceans meet. For this reason, It is important for everyone in this region to share the common goal of strengthening maritime security and connectivity.

However, in recent years in the seas of Asia, we have been witnessing scenes of increasing tensions between States. The international community is seriously concerned.

Japan would like to emphasize the importance of observing international laws, including UNCLOS, “Constitution of the Oceans,” and of taking concrete actions and engaging in cooperation based on such laws.

Prime Minister Abe proposed the “Three Principles of the Rule of Law at Sea” at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2014.

- 1) States should make and clarify their claims based on international law;
- 2) States should not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims, and;
- 3) States should seek to settle disputes by peaceful means.

I believe, now is the time to thoroughly implement these principles.

These principles have received robust support from many states concerned, including those in Asia. Also at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit held in May, the importance of the three principles was reaffirmed.

The G7 Foreign Ministers emphasized, in their Declaration on Maritime Security in April, that coastal states should refrain from any unilateral actions

that would cause permanent physical changes to the marine environment in the area pending delimitation, regardless of whether they are for military or civilian purposes.

In particular, the G7 countries shared serious concerns over any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo. They emphasized the importance of peaceful resolution of maritime disputes, including through arbitration proceedings.

The ruling issued in the arbitration case between the Philippines and China is legally binding for both countries concerned. Japan hopes that compliance by the two countries with this ruling will lead to peaceful resolution of disputes related to the South China Sea.

In addition, Japan is strongly hoping for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the early establishment of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).

In light of the increasingly severe security environment, Japan will implement various policy measures under the policy of “Proactive Contribution to Peace.”

Piracy is a critical challenge for all countries that enjoy the benefits of maritime trade. Japan is actively involved in dealing with piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia, in the Gulf of Aden and in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. Japanese Self-Defense Forces has been conducting antipiracy operations without interruption since 2009.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the conclusion of the ReCAAP. Japan will actively support the activities of the Information Sharing Center, for example by sending successive Executive Directors.

Disasters relief is another important issue. In the cases of the disappearance of the Malaysia Airlines and Air Asia aircraft in 2014, Japan immediately dispatched vessels and aircraft of the Self-Defense Forces to conduct search and rescue activities. Based on these experiences, we stress the importance of further strengthening international cooperation in HA/DR activities in Asia.

To respond to increasing sea-related challenges, countries need to work together.

Japan will make best use of multilateral and trilateral dialogues, such as Japan-India-US and Japan-Australia-US dialogues, and welcomes US active engagement in this region.

Japan also spares no effort to support coastal States in Asia, by providing seamless assistance through a combination of various measures, including ODA, defense equipment cooperation and capacity building assistance.

For the economic prosperity of the Indian Ocean, it is critically important to enhance connectivity from East Asia through South Asia to the Middle East and Africa region.

From this viewpoint, Prime Minister Abe announced the “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure” in May 2015 and the “Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure Initiative” in May 2016.

Japan will steadily implement these initiatives in accordance with the G7 Ise-Shima Principles for Promoting Quality Infrastructure Investment, which underline;

- 1) economic efficiency in view of life-cycle cost;
- 2) safety and resilience
- 3) job creation and capacity building;
- 4) consideration for social and environmental impact, and;
- 5) alignment with economic and development strategies.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude my remarks by stressing the following:

The key to prosperity of the international community is to unlock the dynamism created by the synergy between “two continents” --- Asia and Africa --, and two free and open seas — the Pacific and the Indian Oceans.

To this end, ensuring the maritime security and stability based on the rule of law, as well as further cooperation among us is essential.

Japan will make every possible effort and cooperate with all the countries

concerned to achieve this common goal of our future.

Thank you very much.

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