

**Statement by Foreign Minister Hayashi
at the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific
on 22 February, 2022**

Minister Le Drian, High Representative Mr. Borrell, distinguished representatives,

I am honored to have this opportunity to address this Forum today. I want to express my gratitude especially to Minister Le Drian and High Representative Mr. Borrell, for allowing me to attend virtually.

The situation around Ukraine is becoming more and more tense, with Russia signing a Presidential Decree on February 21 recognizing the "independence" of the "Donetsk People's Republic" and the "Luhansk People's Republic". This series of Russian actions constitute an infringement of the Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and are in violation of international law. They are totally unacceptable and Japan strongly condemns them.

Japan welcomes that this "Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific" is being held in the face of all that's happening. It is a testament to our shared commitment to coordination among like-minded partners to uphold the universal values and principles underpinning the international order.

Japan and Europe have cooperated for the stability in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the post-Cold War period. But could any of us have predicted back then, that there would be a meeting to discuss cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between Japan and Europe?

In the Indo-Pacific region, provocation by North Korea, such as the launch of IRBM-class ballistic missiles, has recently reached a new level. China has escalated its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force and stepped up actions that heighten tensions in the East and South China Seas.

China and Russia have also been engaged in coordinated activities that are concerning, such as their naval vessels jointly circling the Japanese archipelago.

China has expressed support for Russia's position regarding security, including no-Eastward expansion of NATO, in the joint statement at the recent China-Russia Summit meeting.

The guiding principles for dealing with this new international environment remains the same; the fundamental values and principles of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In each of our regions, the logic of power is becoming increasingly manifest and is shaking the existing international order. The "power" I mention here involves not only military muscles but also economic and technological clout, as illustrated by cyber-attacks and economic coercion that Europe has suffered.

Japan aims to respond to changes in the balance of power in the region by strengthening our own defence capabilities and focusing on the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Only then, can diplomatic efforts to achieve genuine peace and stability be more effective.

At the same time, we need to build a rules-based, free and open international order in the Indo-Pacific region, which is the engine of growth for the global economy, encompassing more than half of the world's population. In order to realize this vision, it is more important than ever to strengthen unity and collaboration among us on top of each country's individual efforts, whether it is cooperation among Europeans, among other like-minded countries, or among the Quad and others.

In this context, ASEAN, located at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, is the cornerstone of efforts to achieve a "free and open Indo-Pacific". It is essential that Japan and the EU both support and encourage the ASEAN centrality and unity.

Now, I would like to turn to how I believe Japan and Europe should go about working with each other in concrete ways.

Firstly, efforts to ensure maritime security and safety are essential for promoting stability and prosperity in the region. Japan will continue to assist in areas such as capacity building in maritime law enforcement.

We welcome the deployment of European vessels to the Indo-Pacific and joint exercises with regional partners, including Japan. Looking ahead, we hope to see an even greater presence of our European friends in this region.

Secondly, in supporting infrastructure development, it is necessary to present options that are both attractive and fair. In this regard, Japan is taking initiatives such as participating in the undersea cable extension project in Eastern Micronesia, together with the US and Australia.

In addition, we must not condone attempts to increase undue influence by exploiting the tendency of developing countries with weak financial foundations to lean heavily on a particular country. In order to help those countries achieve sustainable development, we must also address unfair and opaque lending practices outside the framework of international rules. From this perspective, it is important to create an environment in which developing countries won't have to resort to lending that does not comply with international rules.

While keeping in mind these issues, Japan and the EU should work with other like-minded countries. Japan looks forward to pursuing synergies with the EU's Global Gateway under the Japan-EU Connectivity Partnership.

Third, Japan has achieved economic growth by benefiting from the expansion of a free and fair economic zone after the World War Two. This is why we need to continue to strongly oppose unfair trade practices and economic coercion and to maintain and strengthen a rules-based, free and open international economic order, working with like-minded countries.

In the increasingly important digital sector, Japan is actively working to realize Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT). We will work together with the EU to create common international rules regarding data flow.

Furthermore, achieving economic security is also crucial. It is important that we increase our autonomy by reducing the vulnerability of essential infrastructure and supply chains and maintain our advantage by preventing the outflow of cutting-edge technologies. Having this kind of strength makes it easier to deter economic coercion. In these areas, too, we need to advance cooperation among like-minded countries.

It is my sincere hope that cooperation and collaboration among like-minded countries like ours in the Indo-Pacific will be further deepened through today's forum.

Thank you very much for your attention.