

Japan's Foreign Policy and Global Governance (Monday, September 22, 15:00–15:15)

Dr. Merit Janow, Chairperson of Japan Society
Board of Directors,
Dr. Joshua Walker, President & CEO of the Japan
Society,
Dr. Ken Jimbo, Managing Director of the
International House of Japan,
Dr. David Janes, Vice President, North America of
the International House of Japan,
distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I am IWAYA Takeshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. It is such a great honor for me to visit the Japan Society again, following my visit this April.

For many years, Japan Society and the International House of Japan have played pioneering roles as bridges between Japan and the United States, and to the international community.

I am deeply grateful that these two organizations have co-hosted today's event under the very timely theme "Strategic Frontiers: Japan-U.S. Leadership in a Fragmenting World." It is my great honour and pleasure to give the keynote speech in front of the distinguished guests.

Since assuming the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs last October, I have fully dedicated myself to the belief that Japan's diplomatic mission is to guide the international community from “division and confrontation” toward “cooperation and harmony.”

Today, as I reflect on this past year as Minister for Foreign Affairs, I would first like to discuss the three pillars of Japan's diplomacy.

The Japan-U.S. Alliance

First, I would like to begin with the Japan-U.S. Alliance, which is indispensable not only for Japan but for the peace and stability of the region and the entire international community.

Japan-U.S. Alliance is clearly the cornerstone of Japan's foreign and security policy. Our partnership with the United States serves as the foundation for upholding a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

At the same time, I feel that amid the continued challenge and erosion of the foundations of the international order, the importance of the Japan-U.S. Alliance has never been greater for the United States as well.

This January, I attended the inauguration ceremony of the U.S. President, the first time a Japanese Foreign Minister has done so.

Furthermore, the following day, we held the Quad (Japan-Australia-India-U.S.) Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Secretary of State Rubio's first day in office. This allowed me to truly appreciate how highly the United States values the Indo-Pacific region and its Alliance with Japan.

The series of consultations with the U.S. on its tariff measures were nothing but tough. Nevertheless, Japan and the U.S. finally reached an agreement at the end of July, and as the result, additional tariffs, including those on automobiles and automobile parts, were lowered in September.

We will work on the faithful and swift implementation of this agreement, thereby realizing growth and economic security for both Japan and the U.S.

Being allies does not necessarily mean that their opinions or policies are always the same. This is exactly why I believe that the allies should speak frankly and discuss earnestly with each other.

Furthermore, as reaffirmed during the summit between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Trump,

we will cooperate closely to realize a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” and elevate the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights.

Cooperation with Like-Minded Countries and Relations with Neighbouring Countries

Next, regarding the second pillar: cooperation with allies and like-minded countries. The Japan-US alliance alone cannot address all challenges.

In addition to the Quad (the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. grouping) mentioned earlier, we have strengthened cooperative ties by weaving a network with allies and like-minded countries such as the Japan-U.S.- ROK and Japan-U.S.-Philippines arrangements into a cross-hatched pattern, like a web.

Through those networks, practical cooperation is advancing, such as joint training between maritime security agencies and collaboration in economic security. We will continue deepening ties with like-minded countries to realize FOIP, a major vision of Japan’s foreign policy.

Meanwhile, relations with neighbouring countries sometimes face difficult issues. Japan is determined to build future-oriented, stable relationships with neighbouring countries through careful and persistent dialogue.

Regarding Japan-ROK relations, I have had very candid dialogues with H.E. Cho Tae-yul former Minister of Foreign Affairs. I also engaged in thorough, open-hearted discussions with H.E. Cho Hyun, new Minister of Foreign Affairs who visited Japan as his first overseas destination in July.

Japan and the ROK are important neighbours which should cooperate as partners on challenges in the international community. We will continue to communicate closely with the ROK.

Furthermore, Japan, the U.S. and the ROK completely concur in the strategic importance of the trilateral cooperation. We will further strengthen our collaboration. We are going to hold the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Minister's Meeting after this event today.

I would also like to touch upon relations with China, another important neighbour. Japan and China both bear significant responsibility for regional and global peace and prosperity.

At the same time, with China there are also many challenges and concerns, such as unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea, including the waters around the

Senkaku Islands, and the South China Sea, as well as a series of military activities around Japan.

With China, we will not compromise on fundamental principles and will assert our positions when necessary. On that basis, we aim to comprehensively promote a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests” while building “constructive and stable Japan-China relations.”

From this perspective, I myself have engaged in repeated candid dialogues with Foreign Minister Wang Yi and will continue such efforts going forward.

Relations with the Global South

Next, as the third pillar, I would like to touch upon relations with the Global South.

The international community is multi-polarized and diversified. Among the countries referred to as the Global South, some are attaining rapid economic growth. The presence and voices of these countries are increasing year by year.

Against this backdrop, the challenges that humanity must confront –ranging from conventional issues like climate change and global health to emerging challenges stemming from newly-developed

technologies such as AI and biotechnology -has been increasingly diverse and complex.

In order to address those challenges, collaboration with the Global South has never been more crucial. At the same time, the Global South is by no means a monolithic bloc; its interests are intricately intertwined.

Therefore, I believe the crucial task is to engage in considerate communication with the countries referred to as the Global South respectively and build relationships where each party fulfils their responsibilities in their respective positions.

From this perspective, I myself have endeavoured to maintain careful dialogue with countries in the Global South.

For example, during the 9th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD9) held in Yokohama last month, I held meetings with 22 African countries. In addition, over the past year, I was able to hold over 200 bilateral ministerial meetings, taking advantage of the visits by delegates attending the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.

Through such interactions, I got a solid feeling of trust that Japan's diplomacy has built over time, as well as the high hopes placed on Japan's role in the current

international situation. Rather than the relationship providing one-sided support, it is vital to adopt an approach of tackling challenges together. I hope Japan continues to be a country that meets the expectations of other countries.

Global Governance

Next, I would like to discuss the issue of global governance.

Currently, challenges have been pointed out in many international organizations and forums, such as the United Nations, the WTO (World Trade Organization), and the WHO (World Health Organization), and reforms, including improvements in efficiency, are being demanded.

(UN Reform)

The United Nations, which was established in 1945 with 51 members, is now celebrating its 80th anniversary. During this period, the international environment surrounding the UN has changed dramatically. Today, UN membership has grown to 193 countries.

Reforming the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for maintenance of peace and security, and strengthening of the UN's functions are particularly urgent tasks. We will contribute to

achieving tangible progress toward the realization of Security Council reform that expands both permanent and non-permanent membership categories.

Today, the challenges facing the world are complex and intertwined. No single country can solve these problems alone. Nevertheless, the reality is that the UN is not fully demonstrating its ability to unite Member States, as evidenced by the Security Council's dysfunction.

For 80 years since the war, Japan has consistently walked the path of a peaceful nation, actively contributing to international peace and security. We remain fully committed to the United Nations and multilateralism and determined to play our role commensurate with our responsibilities.

(Development Cooperation)

Alongside peace and security, development cooperation-one of the UN's major roles-is also at a critical turning point. With official development assistance from donors trending downward, further mobilization of private finance is essential.

Against this backdrop, Japan will continue to mobilize private finance and technology to promote self-sustaining economic growth of developing countries. Furthermore, through thorough dialogue

we intend to implement problem-solving ODA projects that benefit both developing countries and Japan.

At TICAD9, as mentioned earlier, we also made our endeavour to introduce innovative solutions aimed at enhancing shared prosperity between Japan and Africa, leveraging Japan's technology and expertise in areas -such as AI and digital healthcare

Listening to voices on the ground, respecting the ownership of partner countries, and above all, delivering on our promises of effective cooperation - these are the core strengths of Japan's development cooperation, and ones we remain firmly committed to.

(Human Security)

Global governance is not a matter for statehood; it is individual human beings that make up those states.

The concept of “Human Security,” which Japan has long advocated, focuses on human dignity of each person and effectively links the UN's efforts in different spheres, such as peace, development, and humanitarian assistance.

Japan will continue to advance practical initiatives under this concept.

Nowadays, disasters occur with increasing frequency worldwide and are becoming more extensive, partly

due to the impacts of climate change. As a nation with extensive disaster prevention expertise, since Japan is prone to natural disasters, Japan will share its knowledge and technology with the international community to join the global effort to contribute to sustainable development.

In Pacific Island countries prone to the effects of climate change, Japan's cooperation to improve weather forecasting accuracy using Japan's "Himawari" meteorological satellites is helping to strengthen their disaster- prevention capabilities. Furthermore, we will contribute to further enhancing regional early warning systems by utilizing the "Michibiki" satellite system, which provides positioning information.

"Leave no one behind, abandon no one." Japan aspires to be a country that not only proclaims the principle of "Human Security" but also continues to practice it in individual cases.

Conclusion

The year 1956, when Japan joined the United Nations, was a year of significant upheaval in the international community, marked by the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis. Next year marks the 70th anniversary of that year.

The late Foreign Minister SHIGEMITSU Mamoru, a fellow native from Oita Prefecture, stated in his speech upon Japan's UN accession: “Peace is one and indivisible,” and that “Japan will become a bridge between East and West.”

Today, divisions and confrontations within the international community have been deepened, as seen in the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East. As Shigemitsu foresaw, security in regions like Europe, the Middle East and Asia is truly inseparable.

This is precisely why a “diplomacy of dialogue and cooperation” is needed to transform divisions into harmony and confrontations into collaboration.

In this “divided and confronted world,” Japan will act together with you all to become a “hub” connecting countries.

To conclude my remarks, I reaffirm my determination to conduct Japanese foreign policy worthy of Minister Shigemitsu's words.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.