

OPINION

Japan and Canada are key pillars of a free and fair international economic order

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Prime Minister Mark Carney shakes hands with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation in Gyeongju, South Korea, on Nov. 1.

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Toshimitsu Motegi is Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Shortly after taking office as Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs in October, I participated in two major international conferences, ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Nations) and APEC (the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum).

Starting Tuesday, I am visiting the Niagara region to attend the G7 foreign ministers' meeting. I look forward to having candid discussions with the group's other foreign ministers regarding our policy toward the increasingly complex international situation, and to discussing with Minister Anita Anand not only the international situation, but also co-operation with Canada, including collaboration in the energy sector.

The security environment of today's world is becoming increasingly severe. Beyond Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the turmoil in the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific is also witnessing notable developments of concern: China's diplomatic posture and military movements, North Korea's nuclear and missile development, and the strengthening of co-operation among China, Russia and North Korea.

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It is precisely in such times that I feel greater expectations for Japan and Canada – as stable, reliable democracies – than ever. The compass needle tells the truth, even in a storm.

Japan and Canada are “neighbours” across the Pacific and are important strategic partners sharing values and principles such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

In May, 2021, together with the late foreign minister Marc Garneau, we announced six priority areas of co-operation to contribute to a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). Subsequently, in 2022, the Canadian government published its Indo-Pacific strategy, clearly demonstrating its commitment to the region. Japan and Canada also announced an action plan for contributing to a FOIP.

Security of Information Agreement during Ms. Anand's visit to Japan in July.

Furthermore, amid increasing global economic uncertainty, Japan and Canada are committed to maintaining and strengthening a rules-based, free, and fair economic order, including through the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership).

One symbol of co-operation between our two countries is found in the energy sector. The LNG Canada project, in which Japanese companies are participating, is a flagship of Japan-Canada energy co-operation, and exports of Canadian LNG to the Indo-Pacific began in June.

Furthermore, under Prime Minister Mark Carney's "energy superpower" initiative, a small modular reactor (SMR) construction project in Ontario was selected as an initiative to receive support from the federal Canada Growth Fund, and a Japanese company is also participating.

I vividly remember visiting British Columbia in 2013 as Japan's minister of economy, trade and industry, and touring the shale gas-development site in the Montney area. Twelve years on, I feel heartened to see that the "seeds" sown at that time are now bearing rich fruit.

Japan and Canada also co-operate extensively within the G7 framework. Building on the G7 Critical Minerals Action Plan adopted at the Kananaskis summit in June, Japan is working with partners, including Canada, to diversify the supply of critical minerals and strengthen supply chains.

I also respect Canada's leadership in strengthening maritime security, including the G7 Foreign Ministers' Declaration on Maritime Security and Prosperity, and the launch of the "shadow fleet" task force, to combat illegal or unsafe activities at sea. Maritime security is a fundamental theme underpinning the FOIP, and indispensable for peace and stability in the region and among the international community.

Japan and Canada share both the strength and responsibility to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law. Japan is determined to work with Canada to pursue vigorous diplomacy with a broad perspective,

At the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting, commencing Tuesday, we will engage in frank and substantive discussions on pressing global issues, including Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific, reaffirming the G7's strengthened unity.

In 2028, Japan and Canada will mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Our relationship, built on continued co-operation for mutual prosperity, and regional and global stability, certainly deserves to be called a true friendship.

As Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, I am determined to devote my full efforts to further strengthening this bond and carrying it forward into the next 100 years.

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