

Japan-Australia Leaders' VTC Meeting
Joint Press Release

1. H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan and The Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister of Australia held a Leaders' Meeting via VTC on 9 July 2020.

2. The leaders expressed their deepest sympathies for the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. They recognised that global solidarity, cooperation and effective multilateralism, including through the G20, the East Asia Summit, APEC, the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), the OECD and international financial institutions were required more than ever to defeat the virus and support economic recovery. They further recognised the importance of cooperating to address challenges to a free, open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific region that have become more acute amid the pandemic, including coercive and unilateral actions and disinformation, and the need to ensure the resilience of critical supply chains while maintaining open and rules-based markets. Based upon the close and strong Special Strategic Partnership between Japan and Australia, the leaders expressed their commitment to leadership in combating COVID-19 and building a prosperous, open and stable post-COVID-19 world, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific region.

3. The leaders confirmed that both Japan and Australia were sparing no effort to stop the COVID-19 pandemic, protect lives and livelihoods, and mitigate its social and economic consequences. In order to prevent and better respond to future pandemics, the leaders concurred on the importance of the initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and emphasised the need to strengthen national and international preparedness and response capacities, including through relevant international organisations, such as the WHO. The leaders reaffirmed the role of the WHO in coordinating the fight against COVID-19 and other health crises. They expressed their support for swift implementation of the resolution adopted at the 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA) which requests the Director-General of the WHO to initiate, at the earliest appropriate moment, a stepwise process of impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation of the response to COVID-19. They acknowledged the importance of the participation of Taiwan, as an observer, in the WHA. The leaders also concurred on the importance of facilitating discussions and promoting opportunities for their private sectors to cooperate on clinical trials of medicines and other treatments for COVID-19.

4. The leaders also confirmed the importance of transparent, timely, reliable and fact-based information for an effective global response to the pandemic. Access to quality information constitutes the foundation of good governance and reinforces the resilience of their societies and democracies against coercion. The leaders stressed the value of collaboration in countering disinformation.

5. The leaders highlighted their determination to support a robust economic recovery and rebuild more sustainable, inclusive and resilient economies. The leaders acknowledged energy transitions, including through the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain Pilot project in Victoria, and implementation of the Memorandum of

Cooperation on Carbon Recycling signed by ministers in 2019, will be part of the recovery strategy. They underlined the importance of maintaining free and open markets to promote trade and investment. In this regard, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to sign the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in 2020, which serves as a clear signal of their unwavering support for the multilateral trading system, and regional integration and economic development. The leaders also confirmed their commitment to expand free markets in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond, especially through expansion of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The leaders further underscored the importance of ensuring that any emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19 remain targeted, proportionate, transparent, temporary and consistent with international law such as WTO rules, and do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disrupt global supply chains, especially for essential goods and services. Looking forward, they stressed the need to modernise the trade of goods by further digitalising processes, make global supply chains more resilient, and work together to reform and strengthen the WTO, including through rule-making on e-commerce and dispute settlement system reform, in order to enable a stable and predictable international trade system, and support economic recovery. They also welcomed continuing discussions on cross-border business travel to facilitate economic recovery, in accordance with each country's health advice.

6. The leaders recognised that accelerated digital transformation and ICT innovation in response to COVID-19 should maximise the benefits of the evolving digital economy. In this regard, the leaders committed to continue promoting international discussions under the Osaka Track, to further elaborate "Data Free Flow with Trust", and lead international rule-making under the Joint Statement Initiative on Electronic Commerce at the WTO. The leaders also welcomed increasing cooperation between the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and the Australian Space Agency, including the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation to further promote space cooperation. The leaders also highlighted the Hayabusa-2 capsule recovery in South Australia planned for the end of this year.

7. The leaders acknowledged that Japan and Australia's mutual economic security and prosperity depends on secure and reliable supply chains for critical goods and services. In this context, they emphasised the need to strengthen bilateral cooperation on cyber security, critical technology and energy and natural resources sectors, to ensure secure and resilient critical infrastructure and systems of national significance. Critical minerals and communications such as 5G involving companies from Japan and Australia were a particular focus.

8. The leaders also discussed the current geopolitical situation and stressed the importance of maintaining a free, open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific. The leaders reaffirmed the centrality of ASEAN-led architecture. They noted efforts by both Japan and Australia to deepen their partnerships with ASEAN. The leaders reaffirmed the role of the East Asia Summit (EAS) as the region's premier forum for leaders' discussion of strategic issues and looked forward to the EAS playing a role on COVID-19. The leaders noted the ongoing importance of the principles enshrined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, including the rule of law,

respect for sovereignty, inclusiveness and openness. The leaders committed to continue to work together through various bilateral and plurilateral mechanisms, including the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue with the United States and trilateral meetings with India. They welcomed the inaugural Japan-Australia-India-United States ministerial meeting in September 2019, and reaffirmed their commitment to ongoing quadrilateral consultations. They also welcomed that bilateral engagement has been deepened among these countries, including at leaders' level. They welcomed further broadening and deepening of the defence and security relationship, and encouraged continued discussion on areas of practical and effective defence cooperation, through engagements such as the Trilateral Defence Ministerial Meeting.

9. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to support the Indo-Pacific, in particular their Pacific and Southeast Asian neighbours, to manage the impacts of the pandemic and support health security, economic recovery and sustainable development. This effort includes providing medical supplies and equipment, strengthening partner country health systems, promoting disaster and emergency preparedness and economic resilience and recovery, and accelerating the development and equitable delivery of new vaccines, diagnostics and treatments for COVID-19. The leaders committed to continue strengthening their cooperation with Pacific Island countries in response to COVID-19, including by providing support for health systems through the Essential Services and Humanitarian Corridor and economic assistance. The leaders reiterated their commitment to support Indo-Pacific infrastructure needs, including through the Papua New Guinea Electrification Partnership and the Trilateral Infrastructure Partnership, in accordance with international standards such as the "G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment". They welcomed Japan's COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan of approximately JPY500 billion and JPY53 billion of bilateral Grant Aid for provision of medical equipment to developing countries, as well as Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response.

10. The leaders called on North Korea to make a commitment to dialogue towards complete denuclearisation, including through the resumption of talks with the United States. They reiterated their commitment to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all North Korea's nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, and ballistic missiles of all ranges, and emphasised the importance of full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. They also affirmed their commitment to international efforts in addressing maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers, particularly of petroleum and coal, which breach UN Security Council resolutions. They called on North Korea to end human rights violations and abuses and to resolve the Japanese abductions issue immediately. The leaders shared grave concern about the imposition of a national security law in Hong Kong, as it eroded Hong Kong's autonomy under the "One Country Two Systems" framework.

11. The leaders reconfirmed their strong opposition to any coercive or unilateral actions that could alter the status quo or increase tensions in the East and South China Seas. They expressed serious concern about recent negative developments in the South China Sea, including the continuing militarisation of disputed features,

the dangerous and coercive use of coast guard vessels and 'maritime militia', and efforts to disrupt other countries' resource exploitation activities, in particular under the current circumstances where regional cooperation has become more important due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The leaders reaffirmed that freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea must be respected, and that all disputes should be resolved in a peaceful manner in accordance with international law, as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They also reiterated the importance of full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, noting that where binding legal judgements have been rendered, the parties have an obligation to abide by them avoiding any arbitrary interpretation, in particular the South China Sea Arbitration. They called for any Code of Conduct for the South China Sea to be consistent with international law, as reflected in UNCLOS.

12. The leaders looked forward to holding a Summit Meeting in Tokyo in the nearest possible future, in order to further enhance cooperation between Japan and Australia.