

**Speech by HAYASHI Yoshimasa,
Minister for Foreign Affairs
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Introduction

Mr. Earnest Higa, Chairman of the Board of the Councilors of the US-Japan Council,

Dr. Suzanne Basalla, President and CEO of the Council,

Distinguished leaders of the Council.

First I want to thank all of you for this opportunity to share my views on the state of the world with you all.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the Japanese American community for your heartfelt condolences following the sudden and tragic death of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. The late former Prime Minister Abe cherished our ties with the Japanese American community. He visited the Japanese American National Museum and Go-For-Broke Monument during his official visit to the United States in 2015. He also spent time greeting the Japanese American Leadership Delegation (JALD) each year.

In 2007, former Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta greeted then Prime Minister Abe at the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II. He also passed away in May. As Vice Chairman of the U.S.-Japan Council, he made outstanding contributions to Japan-U.S. relations. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere condolences to the members of the U.S.-Japan Council.

Coincidentally, this year marks the 10th anniversary since the passing away of the late Senator Daniel Inouye and the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Japanese American National Museum, the lifework of the late Irene Hirano Inouye. These are just a few examples of the enormous efforts that Japanese American leaders have made to people-to-people exchanges between our two countries -- the foundation of the robust Japan-U.S. Alliance. I want to express my most profound respect for their contributions.

Today, I will talk about the challenges that Japan and the U.S. must tackle amidst an increasingly severe international environment, as well as my vision for our collective future.

On the State of the World

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are currently standing at a historic crossroads, one fraught with a sense of crisis. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an outrage that has shaken the very foundation of the free and open international order and disrupted the peace and prosperity we have enjoyed, leaving us with a critical question: Will we be able to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law? Or will we end up allowing the international community to become a jungle where the strong overwhelm the weak and brute force can easily change the status quo? We are now facing a watershed moment.

What is happening in Ukraine must never be allowed elsewhere in the world. Russia's aggression needs to go down in history as an apparent failure. For this reason, it is vital that the G7 countries including Japan and the United States unite with other like-minded countries in support of Ukraine and strict sanctions against Russia. We will continue to actively reach out to the remaining middle-ground countries, to build a larger and more resilient international circle of consensus, through which we will never accept unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, no matter where in the world.

Africa has been severely affected by Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Last week, Japan held the 8th International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) in Tunis, where I attended as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy. At TICAD8, Japan, as "a partner growing together with Africa," sent a strong message that it promotes African development with approaches focusing on "people." And, African countries welcomed this message. On the sidelines of the conference, I had a series of bilateral meetings with leaders and ministers from 21 countries in just two days. I confirmed with them that Japan would work together in securing fair and transparent development finance, as well as responding to adverse effects caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including the food and energy crisis.

We now turn our eyes to the Indo-Pacific region. Obviously, ongoing unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East China Sea, including the areas surrounding Senkaku islands, and the South China Sea are matters of growing concern to the international community. In the recent large scale military exercise by China, following House Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, ballistic missiles landed in the sea close to Japan, including our EEZ. It is so disproportionate.

China and Russia are strengthening their military cooperation, including joint flights and joint navigations around Japanese archipelago. Also, North Korea has been intensifying its nuclear and missile activities, which poses serious and imminent security threats not only to Japan, but also clear and severe challenges to the peace and stability of the international community. Concerns are mounting.

The security environment in the Indo-Pacific, the most strategically important region for Japan and the United States, is becoming more challenging. In such a state of the world, Japan, the U.S. and other like-minded countries, including the G7, need to strengthen collaboration to further strengthen a free, open, and inclusive international order in the Indo-Pacific region based on the rule of law. This is exactly what Japan's vision, a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” known as FOIP, seeks to achieve. Japan will strengthen its FOIP efforts and formulate a “FOIP Plan for Peace” by next spring.

More specifically, there are mainly three challenges we need to address in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Three Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region

(Restoration of Strategic Balance)

Our first challenge comes in the form of restoring strategic balance. Diplomacy can work more effectively when the security balance is firmly maintained. As such, there is an urgent need to strengthen the det  rence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. To demonstrate this commitment, Japan will formulate a new National Security Strategy by the end of this year. We will strengthen Japan's own defense capabilities within five years, substantially increasing our defense budgets to underpin this plan.

The presence of the U.S. and its unwavering commitment to the region has become even more critical. To maintain the competitive edge of the Japan-U.S. Alliance well into the future, we need to fundamentally strengthen our cross-domain capabilities, including cyber, space, electromagnetic spectrum, as well as our investment in advanced technologies such as AI and quantum science.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to hold high level candid conversations with China. Japan does not hesitate to say what needs to be said to China, urging Beijing to fulfill its responsibilities. At the same time, cooperation with China is also important when necessary. These views underpin Japan's efforts to build what we call “a constructive and stable relationship with China.”

(Economic Order Formation and Economic Security)

The second challenge facing Japan and the U.S. lies in strengthening the economic order and bolstering economic security. The common goal of Japan and the U.S. is to create a free, open, and inclusive economic order in the Indo-Pacific, harnessing the remarkable growth potential of the region. This goal cannot be achieved without continued U.S. commitment. In this context, Japan welcomes the IPEF, "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework," launched by the U.S. in May this year.

At the same time, the U.S. must continue to be a leader in the economic integration of the Indo-Pacific region. It was the U.S. that developed the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, into what it is today, with a clear-sighted view of its strategic importance. In light of the history of the TPP's establishment and significance, it is none other than the U.S. that should be at the heart of it. Bearing all this in mind, Japan strongly hopes for the return of the U.S. to the TPP at the earliest possible time.

Moreover, I also want to emphasize the need to deepen Japan-U.S. cooperation on economic security. The COVID-19 pandemic and the global incidents that followed exposed the vulnerability of our supply chains. New challenges have emerged, such as the theft of critical technologies, the forced transfer of intellectual property rights, and the coercive pursuit of national interests backed by economic power.

Japan will further promote its cooperation with the U.S., making full use of the Economic “2+2” Ministerial Meeting, of which we held the inaugural meeting this July in Washington D.C. We will also promote our collaboration with other countries in areas such as the stable supply of strategic goods, supply chain resilience, and the development and safeguard of advanced technologies.

(Promotion of Multilayered People-to-People Exchange that Upholds the Japan-U.S. Alliance)

The third challenge is to strengthen our “people-to-people’s ties” between Japan and the United States. Such interactions have long sustained and forged our friendship, making our Alliance even more robust.

Almost thirty years ago, I had the privilege to work as an intern at the offices of then Representative Stephen L. Neal of North Carolina and the late Senator William Roth of Delaware. I was also personally involved in launching the Mansfield Fellowship Program in his office, a program to send federal government employees to Japan and give them training in the Japanese government. Nowadays, promoting people-to-people exchanges in various fields between Japan and the U.S. has become an essential element of my life's work.

As you may know, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Japan. Over these seven decades, we have seen the expansion of a diverse array of people-to-people exchange programs, including “the Japanese American Leadership Delegation Program” and “Kakehashi Project,” as well as “the Tomodachi Initiative,” a public-private partnership led by the U.S.-Japan Council. We must further deepen these exchanges for the next generation, and continue to ensure that our people-to-people exchange programs are keeping pace with the changing times.

Conclusions

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement issued on the occasion of President Biden's official visit to Japan in May, “the two leaders paid tribute to the history, contributions and cultural heritage of Japanese Americans and concurred to engage next generation Japanese American leaders in the future Japan-U.S. cooperation.” Chairman Paul Yonamine of the U.S.-Japan Council touched upon this point when he was interviewed and said he was impressed.

It is increasingly vital that more Japanese Americans play an essential role in our endeavor to pave the way to our future in this dynamically changing world. I am looking forward to having your support to raise next-generation leaders who follow the path of the late Daniel Inouye, Irene Hirano Inouye, Norman Mineta and many more.

Thank you for listening, and I look forward to seeing you again at the Annual Conference in Tokyo in October 28th.

(End)