

Welcome Message by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio
at the Munich Leaders Meeting (May 15, 2023)

As a representative of the Government of Japan, I would like to welcome all the participants of the Munich Leaders Meeting. It is a great honor for Japan to hold this meeting, which is part of the historic and prestigious Munich Security Conference.

In February last year, Russia launched its aggression against Ukraine, which shook the very foundations of the international order. In this serious situation, we in Japan decided to make a major shift in our existing policy toward Russia and then put in place strict sanctions against it. We provided strong assistance to Ukraine right after the aggression broke out. Furthermore, I visited Ukraine in March and met President ZELENSKYY. I also heard directly from people who had experienced the tragedy and reiterated our determination that Russia's aggression against Ukraine should end as soon as possible.

These days, historic changes in the power balances are occurring across the globe, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, in the vicinity of Japan, military buildups are rapidly advancing, including nuclear weapons and missiles, coupled with mounting pressures to unilaterally change the status quo by force.

Under these circumstances, I myself have a strong sense of urgency that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow," and my actions are underpinned by the belief that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force should not be allowed anywhere in the world.

With this in mind, it is very timely that the Munich Leaders Meeting is being held here in Asia.

I will chair the G7 Leaders' Meeting in Hiroshima, my hometown, over the weekend. I intend to resolutely demonstrate the G7's strong commitment to uphold the international order based on the rule of law, firmly rejecting any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force or the threat to use nuclear weapons, as Russia has been doing, much less their actual use. Under this severe international security environment, illustrated by Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons and the development of such weapons by North Korea, it is becoming tougher to envisage a world without nuclear weapons". However, under these circumstances, we need to restore the momentum to bring reality closer to the ideal. I would like to make the most of the precious opportunity presented by the G7 Leaders' Meeting in Hiroshima to pursue realistic and practical initiatives to this end. Following the G7 Leaders' Meeting in Hiroshima, the Quad Leaders' Meeting will be held in Australia on 24th May, when we will step up our cooperation aimed at realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."

With firm resolve, Japan will cooperate with the international community to face this turning point in history and make the utmost contribution to ensuring peace and stability around the world.

KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan