

Japan-Baltic Cooperation Dialogue
(4 March 2024)
Chair' s Summary

Outline of the Fourth Japan-Baltic Cooperation Dialogue

On 4 March 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan hosted the Forth Japan-Baltic Cooperation Dialogue under the theme: "The Future of Japan-Baltic Relations." The dialogue was chaired by Mr. FUKAZAWA Yoichi, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and attended by H.E. Mr. Egidijus Meilunas, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, H.E. Mr. Andris Pelšs, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, and H.E. Ms. Kyllike Sillaste-Elling, Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia.

During the meeting, the participants held intensive discussions under three themes: "Japan-Baltic Cooperation", "Regional Issues" and "People-to-People Exchange". This summary represents the Chair's reflections on their views as expressed during the meeting.

Summary of the Discussion

In "Japan-Baltic Cooperation" session, the participants reaffirmed that Japan and the Baltic countries share values and principles such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, and are important partners in maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law. The participants shared the views that the rapid change of the situation after Russia' s aggression against Ukraine underlined that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable, and security cooperation between Japan and the Baltic states and joint efforts to help Ukraine has become even more important than ever. While sharing the recognition that the axis of connectivity in the Baltic region is shifting from east-to-west to north-to-south due to the impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the participants reaffirmed the importance of the Three Seas Initiative that contributes to a strong, prosperous and united Europe by bolstering the connectivity of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries. Sharing the view

that there is an urgent need to strengthen economic relations between Japan and the Baltic countries in a way that will contribute to the efforts of the Baltic countries to diversify our economic cooperation for sustainable growth, the participants also concurred to strengthen cooperation between Japan and the Baltic countries in the areas such as start-ups, infrastructure, digital, data, healthcare, science and technology, 5G, cyber, and AI. Based on the recognition that economic security is a strategic challenge that Japan and the Baltic countries should closely cooperate and tackle, the participants confirmed their will to closely coordinate in a holistic manner.

In “Regional Issues” session, as two years have passed since the start of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the participants concurred that unilateral change of the status quo by force is unacceptable, that they will continue to provide support to Ukraine in an unwavering manner, and to continue to support Ukraine’s self-sustaining development and recovery and reconstruction including taking in the perspective of WPS. The Participants strongly condemned North Korea’s export and Russia’s procurement of North Korea’s ballistic missiles, as well as Russia’s use of these missiles against Ukraine. The participants also affirmed that implementation of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” is essential for peace, stability, and prosperity in the world, and concurred to work closely on the situation in East Asia such as dealing with North Korea including nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue. The participants shared their serious concern over the situation in the East and South China Seas, and shared the intention to coordinate closely.

The participants also concurred to work together on the situation in the Middle East in order to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which is the highest priority issue at the moment, and to prevent the current situation from spreading to the Middle East region at large.

In “People-to-People Exchange” session, the participants shared the view that the future of Japan-Baltic relations depends on the younger generation. The participants also recognized that accelerating people to people exchanges among young people is the cornerstone of

strengthening security and economic relations, and concurred to promote people to people exchanges even more, in a wide range of aspects, such as tourism, study abroad, business, science, technology, education, culture, and sports, as well as the utilization of the Working Holiday Programmes.

Future of the Japan–Baltic Cooperation Dialogue

The participants shared the view that in addition to bilateral cooperation between Japan and each Baltic countries, future cooperation between Japan and the Baltic countries would be promoted based on three pillars: (1) politics and security, (2) economy, and (3) people-to-people exchange, which are areas of interest to both Japan and the Baltic countries.

The Participants reaffirmed that the Japan–Baltic Cooperation Dialogue, launched in 2018, is an effective forum for discussions to further promote cooperation between Japan and the Baltic countries. The participants shared the view that the Japan–Baltic Cooperation Dialogue will basically be held once a year at the vice-ministerial level even after the Fifth Dialogue and onwards, with a view to conducting robust discussions. The Participants also noted the possibility of holding dialogues at a high level, taking advantage of opportunities such as international conferences as necessary. In addition, the participants shared the view that the agenda of the Japan–Baltic Cooperation Dialogue would include regional issues and agenda items that are important to the chairing country, in addition to the three pillars mentioned above.

Conclusion

The Fourth Dialogue was highly praised by participants for allowing them to better understand the Japan–Baltic cooperation and to candidly discuss further strengthening of the Japan–Baltic relations and individual partnerships, and the participants shared their determination to continue close cooperation.