

Statement by Mr. KAIHARA Kentaro
Ambassador in charge of UN Affairs of Japan
at the Ministerial Meeting to launch
“Group of Friends on Safety and Security of Shipping and
Seafarers”

25 September 2026

I would like to express my appreciation to the co-chairs, H.E. Mme. NYANTI, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia, and H.E. Dr. JAISHANKAR, Minister of External Affairs of India for convening this important session.

To ensure the safety and security of shipping and seafarers, respect for the rule of law and freedom of navigation at sea by all is of paramount importance.

This is why Japan has consistently emphasized the importance of the maintenance and promotion of a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law, with UNCLOS as its cornerstone. This is one of the central pillars of the updated “Free and Open Indo Pacific” announced by Prime Minister Takaichi this May.

To this end, Japan has contributed to regional and multilateral counter-piracy efforts, such as sending our Self-Defence Forces and Japan Coast Guard off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, as well as supporting the Information Sharing Centre of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed ^{リ キャ ッ プ} Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) to enhance maritime law enforcement capabilities of participating States.

As a fruit of these coordinated efforts, piracy incidents around the world have declined from peak levels. However, attacks against commercial vessels across the world continue, jeopardizing the safety of maritime transport and thus posing grave threats to the safety and welfare of seafarers.

In particular, Japan attaches utmost importance, as a matter of urgency, to restoring free and safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb.

We cannot accept the imposition of any additional costs for transit through the Strait of Hormuz. Such costs would increase the overall cost of energy and could have a significant impact on the global economy.

We strongly believe that the future of this Strait should be discussed with all stakeholders, including the coastal states, user states, and the IMO.

On Ukraine, we would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring Ukraine's grain exports through free navigation in the Black Sea.

In closing, maritime security is fundamental to international peace and security. Japan remains fully committed to working closely with the international community, including through the United Nations, to ensure the safety of shipping and the welfare of seafarers worldwide.

Thank you.