

Introduction

Dr. Chipman, distinguished members of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), I would like to start by expressing my gratitude for your kind invitation to the Shangri-La Dialogue again. I had the honor to attend the very first Shangri-La Dialogue. And this year, I am delighted to be back here at this significant dialogue again, following the last year's attendance.

Dear colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, as you know, the Shangri-La Dialogue first convened in 2002 here in Singapore for the purpose of deepening trust among defense authorities and strengthening regional security cooperation. This year marks the 15th anniversary. Through the Dialogue, many Defense Ministers have deepened their friendship among each other to contribute to the regional peace and stability. I wish to express my respect for the great efforts by the Singaporean government for its continued support to this Dialogue, including the one by President Tony Tan, who was serving as Minister for Defense at the time of the inauguration of the Shangri-La Dialogue.

The mission of us, leaders of defense authorities, is not only limited to secure safety of the nation and its people, but also to maintain regional peace and stability, to prevent any conflict from occurring, and in case if any conflict takes place, to strive to resolve it in a swift and peaceful manner. Therefore, as leaders responsible for maintaining security, we are also required to maintain and consolidate the rules-based international order by enhancing mutual trust and ties among each other.

It is quite significant to build trust and ties among us, leaders of defense authorities, through meetings like this Shangri-La Dialogue, and to continuously follow the path of friendship and cooperation while following the commonly shared rules.

1. Japan, Together with Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region

As all of you are aware, ASEAN launched the ASEAN Community at the end of last year. It also celebrates the 10th anniversary since the establishment of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting, ADMM. As it is quite meaningful from the security viewpoint as well, I sincerely welcome such strengthening of unity among ASEAN member countries. I also would like to express my admiration to the great efforts made by Lao PDR, this year's ASEAN chair. Japan is determined to continuously walk a path to development hand in hand with ASEAN, fully respecting the ASEAN centrality.

Japan, found itself in the more and more challenging security environment, has been engaging review of its defense policies in recent years in order to further ensure safety of our country and contribute even more proactively to peace and stability of the international community. The development of Japan's Peace and Security Legislation is a part of such efforts which allows Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense which is affirmed to every nation under the UN Charter, in a very limited manner.

And, it goes without saying that the U.S. military presence in the region

has been playing an indispensable role in creating a stable regional order. Japan supports the U.S.'s rebalancing policy to this region, and remains committed to further strengthening the alliance with the U.S. based on the revised "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation" in order to further contribute to peace, security and prosperity of this region.

We have been making proactive efforts in conducting joint training and exercises with the U.S. and other regional partner countries. We will promote joint training efforts such as Japan-US-ROK missile defense exercise "Pacific Dragon," Japan-US-India naval exercise "Malabar," Japan-US-Australia joint training "Southern Jackaroo," and "Cobra Gold" multinational training held in Thailand. Furthermore, we will also enhance cooperation with ASEAN and European countries to make our efforts in a multi-layered manner.

2. Regional Security Challenges

Before entering today's main topic, I first would like to touch upon various security challenges that we face today. Even after the last Shangri-La Dialogue, many serious terrorist incidents took place around the world and threats of terrorism are growing. North Korea's continuation of its nuclear and missile development activities is clear violation of the UN Security Council Resolutions and is a serious and immediate danger not only to the security of Japan but also to that of the region and the international community. Recently, the U.S. President Barrack Obama visited Hiroshima for the first time as the sitting U.S. President. Japan highly appreciates this visit, and we believe we the

international community should seriously listen to his message delivered during his visit to Hiroshima for the realization of the “world without nuclear weapon.”

Furthermore, we now see unilateral and coercive claims and actions in the region that undermine its maritime order. Such situation would heighten fears among the regional countries and possibly tear apart the ties that we have been built over years, wouldn't it?

For the past few years in the South China Sea, we have been witnessing large-scale and rapid land reclamation, building of outposts, and utilization of them for military purposes. I am deeply concerned that such unilateral attempts to alter the status quo and consolidate such changes as fait accompli considerably deviate from the maritime order based on the principles of international law. Japan is also concerned about unilateral behaviors in the East China Sea as well since it could escalate the situation and raise tension.

Such attempts are nothing but a dare challenge to the order based on the principles of international law. Therefore, such attempts matter not only to directly concerned parties. No countries can be an outsider of this issue. In addition to such situations, recently, some extremely dangerous behaviors have been occurring as certain country's aircraft approached abnormally close to the aircraft which were flying in full compliance with the internationally recognized freedom of overflight principles. As the security environment in this region is getting more and more challenging,

it becomes more important for countries to fully observe the established international law. Especially, major power countries are required to behave in a self-restraint manner in order to avoid any unexpected situation from occurring.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are standing at crossroads in this region, and we have two hands to entrust with our future: which should we accept and enjoy: the world of “might makes right,” or, that of “rule of law”?

The answer is obvious. Nothing but the order where the rule of law is fully achieved will lead us to continuous prosperity.

Two years ago, here at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, too, stressed the importance of the rule of law at sea. He urged everyone to uphold three basic principles; first, states shall make and clarify their claims based on the international law; second, states shall not use force or coercion in trying to deliver their claims; and third, states shall seek to settle disputes by peaceful means. These three principles on the rule of law at sea were once again reconfirmed by the leaders at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit last week.

3. Implementation of the Shangri-La Dialogue Initiative leading the Regional Peace and Stability

Last year, I amplified the three principles that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe put forward, and proposed the “Shangri-La Dialogue Initiative,” or “SDI,” right here as something of a guideline for defense authorities.

This Initiative consists of the following three elements. The first element is “wider promotion of common rules and laws at sea in the region.” The second is “maritime and aerospace security.” Finally, the third element is “improvement of disaster response capability in the region.” Since then, Japan has taken a lead in putting the Initiative into practice in cooperation with other regional countries.

Regarding the first element of “wider promotion of common rules and laws at sea and in the air in the region,” for example, the “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)” is exactly beneficial for the “wider promotion of common rules and laws.” Japan strongly expects the full and effective implementation of the DOC as well as the earliest conclusion of the “Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).”

Also, I would like to reiterate my support for the Freedom of Navigation Operations by the U.S. forces in the South China Sea in full compliance with the international law as well as for peaceful resolution of issues based on international law including arbitration process. In order to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner, every judgment or decision made by related courts must be fully observed by all the claimants in accordance with relevant international law.

In addition, Japan helped the understanding towards CUES spread among countries by proactively utilizing the “Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea,” “CUES,” during training and other interactions with

ASEAN countries. Also, we have provided capacity building assistance on the international aviation law to a total of five countries so far. As such, we are encouraging the international law to be prevailed in the region.

Moreover, if the “rule of law” is challenged at sea, all of us have our own stake and will be involved. In order to maintain open, free, and peaceful maritime order, we need to think together to consolidate the order based on the principles of international law. Why don’t we also discuss this matter widely at various multinational forums?

With regard to the second element of “maritime and aerospace security,” it is important to increase awareness and capacity to address maritime and aerospace security by every nation. Therefore, Japan, for example, has so far provided capacity building assistance to Indonesia in the area of oceanography. We also offered seminars on underwater medicine to Vietnam and Myanmar. Furthermore, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, JMSDF destroyer took part in the maritime security field training exercise conducted in the framework of the ADMM-Plus last month.

I think those joint training are quite important for the regional countries to build relationship of working together. For example, the “Komodo Exercise 2016” carried out in April this year in which Japan also participated not only contributed to enhancing capability in the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, HA/DR, area, but also to strengthening of cooperation among participating countries in the operational front. I am convinced that promoting joint training to

strengthen regional ties is a key to stability.

To maintain the order of ocean and air which are necessary for our life, I think it is important to improve regional countries' capabilities by employing "hybrid cooperation for international security and peace" in a strategic manner by combining capacity building assistance, joint training, and defense equipment and technology cooperation which is emerging as a new area of cooperation. Especially, regarding maritime security, it is necessary to increase maritime domain awareness (MDA) capability of the region by increasing each country's ISR capacity through combining various tools and methods.

As a part of such efforts, Japan is promoting cooperation for the transfer of JMSDF TC-90 training aircraft to the Philippines. In doing so, we plan to conduct not only the transfer itself, but also offer education for pilots and maintenance. As such, we will continue our own efforts which include not only the provision of the hardware itself but also the software such as the provision of education and training of personnel.

The third element, "improving disaster response capability in the region," is especially important for us since we all face threats of various natural disasters. In April this year, large-scale earthquakes hit Kumamoto and Oita, Japan. The words of condolences and supports extended to us from many people around the world encouraged the disaster victims and Japanese nationals. I would like to once again express my heartfelt gratitude to you all.

Since Japan have experienced and overcame a number of disasters so far, we have promoted our efforts in this area of promoting disaster response capability in cooperation with other countries. For example, at the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group (EWG) on HA/DR, which we co-chair with Lao PDR, we discussed measures for aircraft's smooth deployment to disaster-affected area in order to enable swift rescue activities. Furthermore, we will formulate the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC) to optimize foreign forces' assisting activities when supporting disaster relief activities.

In order to increase disaster response capability of the region as a whole, again, hybrid cooperation is necessary. One example of that is the formulation of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC) that I just mentioned. In order to make the SOP a practical procedure, it is indispensable to verify it through joint exercise as well as developing the framework of cooperation. For this purpose, Japan and Lao PDR, together with Thailand and Russia, are now planning and organizing ADMM-Plus HADR/Defense Medicine EWG field training exercise in September this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, as stated so far, this Initiative is the important guidelines that can bring peace and stability to the region. As its proponent, I am very delighted to see various efforts in line with this Initiative are now moving forward.

I believe we should never stop but continue our efforts in accordance with the three guidelines of the Initiative.

In this regard, the crucial point is promoting coordinated efforts among countries to create synergy effects.

Now each country is putting efforts, making the most of what they have, to increase the capability of the region as a whole. Although such efforts are meaningful by themselves, they can be more effective by interlinking each other.

To maintain and consolidate the order based on the principles of international law through the implementation of this Initiative, it is required to interconnect each country's efforts in an organic manner.

Now, I would like to make a proposal to you. Why don't we seek opportunity and venue to discuss and work on specific plan for implementing the SDI in order to maintain and consolidate the order based on the principles of international law?

Conclusion

The peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific underpin the prosperity of the whole international community, not just the region. Therefore, no countries can be an "outsider" of this matter.

For peace and stability in the region, it is necessary for countries to

refrain from unilaterally pursuing their own benefits in a way that does not abide by rules, we have to strictly respect the rule of law and deepen mutual trust and ties. To achieve this goal, today I made a proposal to implement the Initiative which will serve as a guideline for the regional cooperation.

Japan is determined to cooperate and collaborate with countries in and beyond the region to take lead under the banner of proactive contribution to peace based on the principle of international cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to ask for your assistance on implementing this Initiative. Why don't we join hands and work together to realize further prosperity in this region?

Thank you very much.