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United States-Japan-Australia Trilateral Defense Ministers' Meeting (TDMM) 2023 Joint Statement

June 3, 2023

Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence the Hon. Richard Marles MP, Japanese Minister of Defense Hamada Yasukazu, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III, convened a Trilateral Defense Ministerial Meeting in Singapore on June 3, 2023 during the 20th International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Asia Security Summit (2023 Shangri-La Dialogue) in Singapore. This was the twelfth meeting among the defense leaders of the three nations and highlighted the significant progress made in implementing activities and practical areas of cooperation set forth in the 2022 Joint Statement.

The Ministers welcomed and acknowledged the significance of each country's strategic documents issued this past year, confirming the alignment of their strategies and the important role that the trilateral partnership plays in realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific. The Ministers highlighted that trilateral defense cooperation has never been stronger, and noted advances in the complexity of our trilateral cooperation and growing trilateral coordination at all levels.

The Ministers expressed serious concern about the increasingly severe security environment in the East China Sea. They strongly opposed any destabilizing and coercive unilateral actions that may escalate tensions in the East China Sea.

The Ministers expressed concern about the situation in the South China Sea. They strongly opposed any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force or coercion and actions that could increase tensions in the area, including the militarization of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other States' offshore resource exploitation activities. They strongly object to China's claims and actions that are inconsistent with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and which undermine international rules, standards, and norms. The Ministers emphasized the importance of the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, particularly UNCLOS, and reaffirmed the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal decision as final and legally binding on the parties. They resolved to work together to support states being able to exercise their rights and freedoms in the South China Sea, consistent with UNCLOS, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight.

The Ministers emphasized the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and encouraged the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.

The Ministers emphasized the importance of a secure and prosperous Southeast Asia, where sovereignty is respected and in furtherance of broader regional stability. They reiterated continued support for ASEAN centrality and ASEAN-led regional architecture, including ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus). They also emphasized their strong support for the practical implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. The Ministers committed to work closely with regional countries, bilaterally and through ASEAN mechanisms, to support regional security and stability including to promote maritime, cyber, border, and health security cooperation. The Ministers recognized the importance of strengthening cooperation with the Philippines and welcomed the meeting of Australia, Japan, Philippines, and United States' defense ministers taking place while at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

The Ministers committed to deepening cooperation with Pacific island countries, including by working with Pacific partners to support maritime security, respond to increased pressure from natural disasters, and address the impacts of climate change. The three countries will continue expanding regional engagement and strengthening cooperation with Pacific counterparts, particularly through the Pacific Islands Forum and other inclusive Pacific architecture.

The Ministers are deeply concerned about North Korea's nuclear and missile development. They strongly condemn North Korea's repeated launches of missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles at an unprecedented frequency, and the most recent claimed space launch using ballistic missile technology, which is a serious violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. The Ministers remain committed to working with the international community to address North Korea's serious threat to the region. They reiterate their call on North Korea to immediately resolve the abduction issue and cease its human rights violations.

Recognizing the important role the trilateral partnership plays in boosting regional stability, the Ministers committed to continue to take concrete and practical measures to improve interoperability and deepen defense cooperation across the spectrum. They reinforced the importance of consulting with each other and developing coordinated responses to regional disasters and crises.

The Ministers noted the significance of the introduction of counterstrike capabilities by Japan and investment in long-range strike capabilities by Australia. They confirmed that Australia and Japan would work closely together, and with the United States, as these capabilities are introduced.

The Ministers welcomed the progress being made toward the entry into force of the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA). They acknowledged the important role of the RAA in enabling deeper trilateral cooperation and enhancing interoperability. The Ministers agreed to leverage the RAA for this purpose as soon as it enters into force and committed to working on a roadmap for conducting trilateral cooperation activities in Australia over the coming year.

The Ministers welcomed the recent announcement of Australia's pathway to acquire conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines. Japan reiterated its consistent support for AUKUS.

The Ministers welcomed the progress being made and highlighted achievements including the first coordinated Asset Protection Mission (APM) during a trilateral activity in November 2022, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) cooperation at Iwakuni Air Base in March 2023.

The Ministers exchanged views on the regional security environment and concurred to resist unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in all parts of the world and to work closely to deter and counter actions that undermine international peace and stability and the international system based on the rule of law. They strongly condemned Russia's unprovoked, unjust, and unlawful aggression against Ukraine. They shared the view that Russia should immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and cease hostilities in line with the Charter of the United Nations as called for in the resolution A/ES-11/L.7 adopted by the UN General Assembly on February 23.

The Ministers committed to continue enhancing defense cooperation among the three countries across the following areas:

Trilateral Activities and Exercises:

- Conduct trilateral F-35 Joint Strike Fighter training in Australia.
- Increase complex and high-end trilateral exercises in northern Australia such as Exercise SOUTHERN JACKAROO to enhance readiness.
- Regularize Asset Protection Missions for the U.S. Forces and the Australian Defence Force by Japan Self-Defense Forces.
- Accelerate and deepen trilateral information-sharing cooperation.
- Continue trilateral policy and strategy dialogues on regional issues.

Expanded Cooperation:

- Seek to conclude a trilateral Research Development Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) framework at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Boost strategic capabilities cooperation across multiple domains, including in integrated air and missile defense (IAMD), intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and undersea warfare.

Inclusive Partnerships:

- Further deepen engagement with ASEAN Member States (including through the ADMM-Plus framework), Pacific island countries, European countries and like-minded partners and allies to uphold and reinforce free and open international norms in every region in the world.
- Coordinate capacity building engagements with regional partners.
- Work in complement with Pacific partners in addressing the challenge of unexploded ordnance.

The Ministers affirm that trilateral cooperation is essential to maintain democratic values, transparency and respect for international norms, and expressed their firm determination to keep the Indo-Pacific region as a free, open, secure, and prosperous region while continuing to expand the scope of defense cooperation.

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