

Press Releases: Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region

Fact Sheet
Office of the Spokesperson

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One year ago in Vietnam, President Donald J. Trump laid out America's vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, in which all nations are sovereign, strong, and prosperous. This week, Vice President Michael R. Pence reaffirmed the ironclad and enduring U.S. commitment to the region and highlighted expanded cooperation with our partners. The Vice President led the U.S. delegation attending major regional summits and bilateral meetings, accompanied by Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan and other senior officials.

As the Vice President noted, American economic dynamism drives prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and worldwide. No country invests more in the region than the United States, which currently has \$940 billion in foreign direct investment fueling growth in Indo-Pacific nations. The U.S. government is also providing over \$1.8 billion in assistance to the region this year.

The U.S. approach to the Indo-Pacific focuses on three vital areas: economics, governance, and security.

Enhancing Shared Prosperity

The United States is taking a whole-of-government approach to advance fair and reciprocal trade, promote economic and commercial engagement that adheres to high standards and respects local sovereignty and autonomy, and mobilize private sector investment into the Indo-Pacific. During the Vice President's trip to the region, the United States announced initiatives and partnerships that put the United States and the region on a strong path to expanded cooperation in the coming year.

Partnerships for Prosperity

- Vice President Pence highlighted the BUILD Act, which President Trump signed into law in October. The BUILD Act establishes a new U.S. International Development Finance Corporation that doubles U.S. development finance capacity to \$60 billion. This historic development will ignite more opportunities for partnership in the Indo-Pacific.
- Cooperating within the Japan-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership (JUSEP)

established last year, the United States and Japan intend to facilitate high-standard investment in projects to supply liquefied natural gas (LNG) or build LNG infrastructure by aligning the Japanese government's target of \$10 billion in public and private investment and capacity building training with the United States' Asia Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy (Asia EDGE) initiative.

- The U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to advance cooperation in mobilizing private investment in the Indo-Pacific.
- On November 18, the United States, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea plan to release a joint statement outlining a five-nation partnership with the goal of supporting Papua New Guinea in expanding electricity access to 70 percent of its population by 2030.
- At the 6th U.S.-ASEAN Summit, the Vice President announced a new U.S.-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership that will help municipal governments advance the digital transformation of urban systems and increase U.S.-ASEAN commercial engagement in the digital economy. The United States' initial investment in this program is \$10 million.
- Vice President Pence and Singapore Prime Minister Lee announced a Memorandum of Understanding to develop joint activities in critical areas like infrastructure, energy, financial technologies, e-commerce, and advancing smart cities through an enhanced commercial collaboration platform.
- On November 15, senior officials from the United States, Australia, India, and Japan met in Singapore for the third consultation on the Indo-Pacific since November 2017.

Building Momentum in Energy, Infrastructure, and Digital Economy

- Vice President Pence and Singapore Prime Minister Lee agreed to explore ways for the new U.S. International Development Finance Corporation and Singapore's recently announced *Infrastructure Asia* to collaborate on sustainable infrastructure development in the region.
- Under the auspices of the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership launched by the United States this summer, Vice President Pence and Prime Minister Lee announced a new U.S.-Singapore Cybersecurity Technical Assistance Program that will harness U.S. private sector expertise to improve cybersecurity in ASEAN member states.
- Vice President Pence reaffirmed and strengthened the U.S.-ASEAN Strategic Partnership during the U.S.-ASEAN Summit on November 15, 2018, where a U.S.-ASEAN Joint Statement on Cybersecurity was released.
- At the East Asia Summit, the United States co-sponsored with the Republic of Korea a statement on the Safe and Secure Use, Storage, and Transport of Nuclear and Other Radioactive Materials.
- The U.S. Trade and Development Agency approved funding to provide technical assistance to the Philippines to help deploy their National Broadband Network and increase the adoption of cloud computing.

Growing Economic Partnerships through APEC

- At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders Meeting, the United States launched this year U.S.-Support for Economic Growth in Asia (US-SEGA) technical assistance program. US-SEGA, a five year program with an initial tranche of \$9 million in U.S. funding, will build capacity in APEC economies to adopt high-standard, comprehensive trade and investment policies that promote fair trade, open markets for U.S. businesses, and increase economic growth throughout APEC and the Indo-Pacific region.
- The United States will advance U.S. economic priorities at the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting relating to the digital economy, structural reform, women's economic empowerment, and services trade.

Strengthening People-to-People Connections

- Vice President Pence announced the 2018 Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Summit will be held in Singapore from December 3-5 to explore U.S.-ASEAN partnerships for economic growth and innovation.

The Vice President's visit builds on the past year of success in expanding economic engagement between the United States and the Indo-Pacific.

- The United States is modernizing our trading relationships to match the economic realities of the 21st century by updating the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) and announcing our intent to enter into negotiations for a United States-Japan Trade Agreement.
- At the Indo-Pacific Business Forum in July, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and other Cabinet officials announced new economic initiatives to spur private investment in digital economy, energy, and infrastructure.
 - The *Infrastructure Transaction and Assistance Network* enhances U.S. government efforts to advance sustainable infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific.
 - *Asia EDGE* (Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy) strengthens energy security and energy access across the Indo-Pacific.
 - The *Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership* improves partners' digital connectivity and expands opportunities for U.S. technology exports.
- Secretary Pompeo also announced a new \$350 million Millennium Challenge Corporation compact with Mongolia, and strengthened support for important regional institutions: ASEAN, APEC, the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- The Department of Commerce granted Strategic Trade Authorization Tier 1 status to India, enabling American companies to export more high-technology items under a streamlined license exception.
- The Department of Commerce announced that its largest trade mission, *Trade Winds*, is dedicated this year to the Indo-Pacific, as part of *Access Asia* – a series of 25 events to connect American firms with opportunities in Indo-Pacific markets.

Championing Good Governance and Civil Society

Good governance is a core pillar of the U.S. vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. The United States is committed to working with Indo-Pacific nations to create the conditions needed to unlock greater private investment, combat corruption, and secure nations' autonomy from foreign coercion. We will continue to promote transparency, openness, rule of law, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the United States has continuous and ongoing programs supporting these goals. As the Vice President emphasized, our investments in these areas total over \$400 million over a two-year period.

On November 17, the Vice President announced an Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative that will direct our investments in this space to advance shared goals in the region. This initiative will promote sound, just, and responsive governance through efforts to counter corruption while encouraging strong civil society, responsible borrowing, honest procurement and contracting practices, and judicial sector and legal reform, among other aims essential to good governance.

The United States is proud to share these goals with many allies and partners, including ASEAN, whose charter calls for "a regional architecture that is open, transparent, and inclusive." The Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative provides an elevated platform for expanding cooperation with our allies, partners, and regional institutions to advance these shared principles.

The United States will work to identify collaborative opportunities to strengthen governance practices in the Indo-Pacific, both bilaterally and through regional mechanisms including ASEAN, APEC, the Pacific Islands Forum, the Lower Mekong Initiative, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

Ensuring a Peaceful and Secure Regional Order

The United States is deepening cooperation across the Indo-Pacific to confront common threats, protect shared resources, and uphold sovereignty. We are working hand-in-hand with the region to denuclearize North Korea, safeguard navigational rights and freedoms in the East and South China Seas, and prevent the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. American security and prosperity depends on a free and open Indo-Pacific, and we will continue to work with any nation, large or small, to advance that vision now and for future generations.

During the Vice President's visit, the United States and Japan announced delivery in 2018 of ten F-35As, valued at \$1.38 billion, under our Foreign Military Sales program, with six more to be delivered in 2019. Overall, U.S. companies made \$9.42 billion in direct commercial sales of defense goods and services in the Indo-Pacific region over the past year.

The United States is providing more than half a billion dollars in security assistance to Indo-Pacific nations this year – more than double the previous

year. This includes Secretary Pompeo's announcement at the ASEAN Regional Forum in August of nearly \$300 million in assistance to strengthen maritime security and domain awareness, humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR), and peacekeeping capabilities, as well as to counter transnational crime. The United States also is expanding maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean region, including through the new Bay of Bengal Initiative, and extending maritime security, HA/DR, and peacekeeping programming to the Pacific Islands.

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