

Press Releases: Australia-Japan-United States Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Ministerial Joint Statement

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
August 6, 2017

Following is the text of a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the Australia-Japan-United States Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Ministerial:

Begin text:

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Julie Bishop, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Taro Kono, and the Secretary of State of the United States, Rex Tillerson, met in Manila, the Philippines, on August 7, 2017, for the seventh ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD). The ministers reaffirmed the importance of the trilateral strategic partnership among these three countries to ensure a free, open, peaceful, stable, democratic, and prosperous Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region and world, based on the rule of law, and reiterated their enduring commitment to further deepening coordination and cooperation to achieve this goal. The ministers noted that the partnership, which is founded upon the robust Australia-U.S. and Japan-U.S. Alliances, rests on the unshakable foundation of shared interests and values, including a commitment to a rules-based international order, respect for international law, open economies, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The ministers condemned in the strongest terms North Korea's unlawful pursuit of a nuclear weapons program and unprecedented ballistic missile activity since last year, including the launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles on July 4 and July 28, 2017. These actions blatantly violate multiple United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and clearly demonstrate that North Korea increasingly poses new levels of threat to regional stability and global security. In this regard, the ministers welcomed the unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2371 on August 5 which imposes a total ban on certain North Korean exports. The ministers called on the international community to implement strictly UNSC resolutions and impose additional diplomatic and economic measures to address the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threat posed by the North Korean regime and its

destabilizing behavior, and to make further efforts to urge North Korea to abandon its current threatening and provocative path and immediately take steps to denuclearize. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strong autonomous sanctions measures on North Korea and will coordinate these sanctions and capacity building measures, including in the area of export control to detect and disrupt North Korean WMD proliferation networks. The ministers also urged ASEAN member states to maximize pressure on North Korea. The ministers called on North Korea to immediately and fully comply with relevant UNSC resolutions and the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks of September 2005. The ministers also called on North Korea to end its systematic human rights violations and abuses and to immediately release all foreign nationals being held in North Korea, including Japanese abductees and American citizens.

The ministers underscored the importance of upholding the rules-based order, called on all states to respect freedom of navigation and overflight and other internationally lawful uses of the seas, and reiterated that the three countries will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows. The ministers expressed serious concerns over maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS). The ministers voiced their strong opposition to coercive unilateral actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions. In this regard, the ministers urged SCS claimants to refrain from land reclamation, construction of outposts, militarization of disputed features, and undertaking unilateral actions that cause permanent physical change to the marine environment in areas pending delimitation. The ministers called on all claimants to make and clarify their maritime claims in accordance with the international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and to resolve disputes peacefully in accordance with international law. The ministers called on China and the Philippines to abide by the Arbitral Tribunal's 2016 Award in the Philippines-China arbitration, as it is final and legally binding on both parties. The ministers noted the significance of the UNCLOS dispute settlement regime and the Tribunal's decision in discussions among parties in their efforts to peacefully resolve their maritime disputes in the SCS. The ministers urged ASEAN member states and China to fully and effectively implement the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). The ministers acknowledged the announced consensus on a framework for the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC). The ministers further urged ASEAN member states and China to ensure that the COC be finalized in a timely manner, and that it be legally binding, meaningful, effective, and consistent with international law.

The ministers welcomed the development of trilateral cooperation on capacity building for maritime security and safety in Southeast Asia. The ministers resolved to advance and build on this cooperation through ongoing exchanges of information and dialogue on regional needs. The ministers reiterated the commitment of the three nations to continue coordinating their respective assistance programs and to identify ways they can more closely collaborate in the future.

The Ministers expressed strong opposition to any coercive or unilateral

actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions in the East China Sea and will remain in close communication about developments in the area.

The ministers discussed ways to work together to counter terrorism and violent extremism. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the counter-terrorism-specific trilateral strategic dialogue to enhance coordination and programming. The ministers noted the importance of increasing engagement in regional and multilateral organizations such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. The ministers expressed support for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund and the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and called for its implementation. The ministers resolved to continue to support internally displaced persons and to coordinate on protecting soft targets and countering terrorist financing. The ministers also resolved to advocate for and strengthen existing information sharing mechanisms, such as those provided by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and to combat the flow of foreign terrorist fighters both to and from conflict areas. The ministers reiterated their commitment to continue coordinating their respective assistance programs and to identify ways to collaborate in the future. The ministers expressed their concerns regarding the recent attacks by the ISIS-affiliated groups in Marawi, the Philippines, the loss of life, and the displacement of local populations. The ministers urged increased cooperation in the region to counter such terrorist activity and pledged their continued support for these efforts.

The ministers underscored the importance of advancing cybersecurity, and committed to supporting the strategic framework for international cyber stability based on the application of existing international law; adherence to voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace in peacetime; and the implementation of confidence building measures, supported by coordinated capacity building programs. The ministers affirmed their mutual commitment to promote operationalization of voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible state behavior recommended by the report of the 2015 UN Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The ministers supported the establishment of a new ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ARF ISM on ICTs) as a dedicated international forum for advancing cyber cooperation among member states.

Congratulating ASEAN on its 50th Anniversary, the ministers noted the central role ASEAN has played in the development of the Asia-Pacific regional architecture and its contribution to the region's stability and prosperity. The ministers resolved to work together to strengthen regional ASEAN-centered organizations, especially the East Asia Summit (EAS). The ministers stressed the value of the EAS as the premier Leaders-led forum in the region to address political and strategic issues and reiterated the importance of strengthening it in accordance with the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Tenth Anniversary of the East Asia Summit. The ministers recognized the complex challenges facing the Pacific Island Countries, and underscored the

importance of further trilateral cooperation to enhance economic resilience, sustainable development, and regional peace and security.

The ministers recognized the importance of ensuring free and open sea-lanes as well as enhancing regional connectivity, including through quality infrastructure development.

The ministers resolved to continue to work closely together and with their partners to promote strong, sustainable growth and prosperity, including by supporting good governance, the rule of law, and human rights.

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Press Releases: 10th Ministerial Meeting of the Lower Mekong Initiative: Joint Statement

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
August 6, 2017

Following is the text of a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the 10th Lower Mekong Initiative Ministerial Meeting:

Begin text:

On August 6, 2017, the Foreign Ministers of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand, the Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, the Secretary of State of the United States, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN met in Manila for the 10th Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) Ministerial Meeting. The Ministers of the Mekong countries welcomed

Secretary Tillerson's chairmanship of the Lower Mekong Initiative.

The Secretary and Ministers re-affirmed their commitment to LMI as a primary driver of Lower Mekong sub-regional economic integration and sustainable development, pledging to continue their collaborative efforts toward peace, stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia. The Secretary and Ministers lauded the on-going work under each of LMI's six Pillars – Agriculture and Food Security, Connectivity, Education, Energy Security, Environment and Water, and Health, and charged the Pillars to redouble their efforts to advance regional priorities most effectively and successfully implement the LMI Plan of Action 2016 – 2020. The Ministers also emphasized the need for the LMI to work in tandem with and complement other country and regional plans of action, including ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together.

The seven participants praised the effective implementation of the Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership, announced at the 2016 LMI Ministerial, noting its success in equipping LMI member states in the management and development of regional infrastructure projects. Through the Partnership, the United States committed to further practical cooperation with the Friends of the Lower Mekong and more unified and sustainable engagement with the LMI members.

The Secretary and Ministers congratulated the progress of the LMI Education Pillar, and its engagement among young scientists and academics to identify areas of regional cooperation in education and establish national focal points to coordinate joint scientific research projects, which will contribute to prosperous and sustainable development in the Mekong sub-region.

The Ministers applauded the new Mekong Water Data Initiative proposal and hailed it as an important step in developing science-based decisions of their shared river system. The Ministers concluded that enhancing the Mekong River Commission's technical capabilities would help to facilitate data gathering and sharing in the region and requested their respective ministries to coordinate efforts to implement the Water Data Initiative effectively. The LMI members pledged to continue their close collaboration with the Friends of the Lower Mekong and the Mekong River Commission to support inclusive, sustainable and environment-responsible growth in the Mekong river basin.

The LMI partners determined to continue discussions on the restructuring of the LMI Pillars at the upcoming Regional Working Group meeting in Laos and committed to work together to improve efficiencies, reflect evolving priorities in the sub-region, and devise a results-oriented way forward.

The Secretary and Ministers arranged to reconvene for the 11th LMI Ministerial meeting in 2018 in Singapore.

Heads of Delegations:

H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Senior Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia

H.E. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lao People's Democratic Republic

H.E. Kyaw Tin, Minister of State, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

H.E. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

H.E. Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State, United States of America

H.E. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN

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[Press Releases: Jamaica Independence Day](#)

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
August 5, 2017

On behalf of the United States, congratulations to the Jamaican people on the 55th anniversary of your independence on August 6.

Jamaica plays an important role as a regional leader, most recently with its efforts on economic reform. We look forward to strengthened collaboration between our countries on security, prosperity, diplomacy, energy, education, and health – as underscored in the United States-Caribbean Strategic

Engagement Act.

We deeply appreciate our relationship and congratulate all Jamaicans on the occasion of your Independence Day.

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Press Releases: Bolivia Independence Day

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
August 5, 2017

On behalf of the United States Government, congratulations to the people of Bolivia on the anniversary of your independence on August 6.

The United States and the people of Bolivia enjoy a deep and lasting relationship based on mutual respect. We take pride in our partnership with the Bolivian people to advance entrepreneurship and education initiatives that help Bolivians realize their full potential. The United States is one of Bolivia's most important trading partners and we are committed to promoting mutually beneficial trade. We will continue to cooperate to protect and preserve Bolivia's rich cultural heritage. We welcome the prospect of future collaboration based on mutual benefit and mutual respect.

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Press Releases: Presidential Election in Rwanda

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
August 5, 2017

The United States congratulates the people of Rwanda on their active and peaceful participation in the presidential election held August 4. However, we are disturbed by irregularities observed during voting and reiterate long-standing concerns over the integrity of the vote-tabulation process.

We commend the Rwandan media for reporting on complaints of harassment of some opposition candidates and Rwandan citizens during the campaign. We likewise commend average citizens, the National Electoral Commission, and government officials for speaking out and addressing those complaints. We applaud the televised debate, while noting that voters' understanding would have benefited from broader participation of the candidates themselves.

We remain concerned by the lack of transparency in determining the eligibility of prospective candidates. We hope the new electoral law to be debated in the next session of Parliament will clarify that process well before the 2018 parliamentary elections.

The United States stands by the people of Rwanda in their efforts to build strong democratic and inclusive institutions in order to ensure long-term stability and a democratic, prosperous future for all.

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