

## **Indo-Pacific Conference, NATO Association Canada**

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**Ambassador KAWAMURA Yasuhisa, Ambassador of Japan to Canada**

● Thank you very much for invitation to this important webinar.

● The Indo-Pacific region has become the growth centre of the world. According to the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific published in September of this year, the Indo-Pacific region is home to 60% of the world's population, producing 60% of global GDP, contributing two thirds of current global growth. By 2030, the overwhelming majority (90%) of the 2.4 billion new members of the middle class entering the global economy will live in the Indo-Pacific.

● The region is also home of challenges to rules-based institutions and maritime security that without proactive engagement will have the potential to derail the region's, and in the end, global stability and prosperity as well.

●Against this background, Japan has been working together with partner countries to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific.

●Let me start by elaborating on the Japan-initiated 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) vision and the current picture of Japan-Canada joint endeavour for realizing it.

●Its idea was first mentioned in August 2007, then Japanese Prime Minister Abe delivered a speech at the Parliament of the Republic of India. He stated 'the Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A "broader Asia" that broke away from geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct form'.

●9 years later in 2016, Prime Minister Abe, in his address at the international conference on African development (TICAD VI) in Nairobi, stated 'Japan bears the responsibility for fostering the confluence of the

Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place which values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous.’ This address has resulted into formulation of FOIP vision today.

●FOIP is a vision to formulate a strategy to engage in the region based on supporting resilience, prosperity, and stability grounded in the promotion of a rules-based, inclusive order. It is no coincidence that countries not limited to Japan, but also India, Australia, ASEAN, France, Germany, the EU and the United States have launched a strategy, vision, or outlook on the geostrategic concept of the Indo-Pacific and that these visions include many common elements. The most important is a commitment to shared values, or the rules-based order, a common banner to rally under and use as foundations for peace and stability in the region. I cannot emphasize their importance enough amidst increasing attempts to undermine them. What we are witnessing today in East and South China Seas: unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, may occur in any part of the region or the seas connecting the region.

●Japan–Canada FOIP cooperation initiated at the Japan–Canada summit meeting in Ottawa in April 2019 when Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Trudeau shared their views on the vision of a free and open Indo–Pacific. Following the agreement, in May of this year, our two Foreign Ministers announced the six operative areas of cooperation towards the realization of a Free and Open Indo–Pacific, namely: (1) The Rule of Law, (2) Peacekeeping Operations, Peacebuilding, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, (3) Health Security and Responding to COVID–19, (4) Energy Security, (5) Free Trade Promotion and Trade Agreement Implementation, (6) Environment and Climate Change.

●This agreement means that Japan and Canada have now opened a new chapter; a meaningful step forward to wide–ranged actions in full recognition that acting together is power.

●In NATO Foreign Ministers’ Meeting last year, then Japan’s Foreign Minister Motegi mentioned ‘it is most reassuring to have NATO as

Japan's partner as Japan strives to advance the vision of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" by referring severe security environment as well as growing challenges to the rules-based order in Indo-Pacific region. Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme between Japan and NATO describes 'Japan and NATO are reliable and natural partners, sharing common values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as strategic interests. Japan and NATO cooperate closely in order to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law. Japan and NATO are each determined to safeguard these shared values and strategic interests as well as the freedom and the security of our populations.' I want to reiterate again "Acting together is power".

● Today more countries and regional organizations talk about their strategic engagement with the Indo-Pacific region. The establishment of an Indo-Pacific strategic dialogue to coordinate shared priorities between Canada and US has just been announced. Japan, as a country initiated FOIP, is determined to promote in a robust manner a free and open Indo-

Pacific with allies and like-minded countries. I, therefore, cannot emphasize enough the importance of the webinar today which will discuss the way to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific among distinguished panelists. I look forward to a fruitful discussion. Thank you.