

(Provisional Translation)

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“De-escalating the North Korean Crisis”

Dr. Chipman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am truly honored to attend this year’s Shangri-La Dialogue for the first time in four years since I last attended as Defense Minister.

I am delighted to take the podium here in Singapore to discuss the North Korean situation. This is undoubtedly the most crucial and imminent topic within the current security environment, given the planned US-North Korean Summit on June 12th in this city. I am particularly delighted to join my two fellow ministers: Minister of National Defense Song from the Republic of Korea, who is working tirelessly to progress dialogue with North Korea, and Minister of National Defence Sajjan from Canada, the hosting country of the G7 Summit Meeting next week to lead the discussion on the North Korean issue. I would like to express my profound gratitude to the International Institute for Strategic Studies and those concerned in the Government of Singapore for hosting such an important dialogue at this time. Today, I wish to share some of what Japan is doing to resolve the issue of North Korea, as well as Japan’s determination in working towards long-term stability and the development of the Indo-Pacific region.

Five years ago, in 2013, I spoke at the Shangri-La Dialogue on North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile programs. I described them as a serious threat that would undermine the peace and security of the international community and that it was absolutely unacceptable. I also stated that Japan, in close coordination with the United States and South Korea, strongly called on North Korea to comply with the obligations pursuant to relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, and to halt acts of provocations, and to take concrete actions towards denuclearization.

I also touched on North Korea's abduction issue, as this was relevant to countries around the world including Thailand, Lebanon and Romania, in addition to Japan and South Korea. I asked for cooperation in resolving such a violation of basic human rights, as this was a universal problem for the international community as a whole.

This was five years ago, and I remember enjoying strong support and affirmative remarks from the Shangri-La audience. Since then, Japan's stance on North Korea has remained unchanged.

In the meantime, however, nuclear and missile programs under the Kim Jong Un regime have further developed. In particular, North Korea has launched as many as 40 ballistic missiles in the last two years, with many of them impacting Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone. Furthermore, two ballistic missiles flew over Japan and fell into the Pacific Ocean over the past year.

It is now possible that North Korea's ballistic missiles can reach many countries and regions around the world, including the United States mainland, posing a grave threat to the whole international community. As for the nuclear program, North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests over the last two years, including a test conducted last September, which likely involved their largest explosion ever, estimated to be ten times as powerful as the atomic bomb that hit Hiroshima.

To deal with North Korea's nuclear and missile developments, the United Nations Security Council, including China and Russia, has adopted sanction resolutions. The international community has been putting pressure on North Korea in accordance with these resolutions, by drastically curbing the supply of crude oil and oil products and cutting its source of foreign currency by restricting coal exports and dispatch of workers to other countries.

As a result of internationally concerted pressure, we have started to observe changes in North Korea's rhetoric and behavior since the beginning of this year. Capturing this opportunity, South Korean President Moon Jae-in has taken a proactive step, and the Inter-Korean Summit was held in Panmunjeom on April 27th. This summit produced the "Panmunjeom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula," which confirmed in writing the intention of North Korea's Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. I take this as a positive sign toward comprehensive resolution of various issues concerning North Korea, and I would like to express my sincere and profound respect to the efforts made by the Korean government led by President Moon and Defense Minister Song to get to where we are today.

The U.S.-North Korea Summit will take place on June 12th, as President Trump has made the announcement, and it is strongly hoped that the summit will become an opportunity for concrete, substantial progress towards a complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of all North Korea's weapons of mass destruction including biological and chemical weapons and ballistic missiles of all flight ranges, in addition to a breakthrough in the Japanese abduction issue.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us now take a moment to reflect on the last quarter of the century. We have seen history repeat where North Korea would declare to denuclearize, thereby portraying itself as conciliatory and forthcoming, only to turn around to void all international efforts toward peace. For example, North Korea once agreed to fulfill the "Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" in 1994, but it actually continued its nuclear development in secrecy. Similarly, North Korea promised to give up all nuclear weapons and its existing nuclear programs in the joint statement of the 2005 Six-Party Talks. Instead of following through with this promise, Pyongyang went ahead with its first nuclear experiment in 2006, threatening surrounding countries with a series of ballistic missile launches which continued until last year.

In light of how North Korea has behaved in the past, I believe that it is important not to reward North Korea solely for agreeing to have a dialogue. The only way to bring peace to the Korean Peninsula is to ensure that North Korea will take concrete actions toward realizing the CVID of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all flight ranges in accordance with a series of UN Security Council resolutions, and I believe that this is the only means to bring about peace in the Korean Peninsula.

As defense authorities, we have two major roles to play in resolving these issues. The first role is to maintain current maximum pressure on North Korea in tandem with diplomatic efforts. As U. S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis has often stated, the role of the defense authorities is to support diplomacy and ensure that the diplomats can speak from a position of strength. North Korea now finds itself seeking peace dialogue with the Republic of Korea and the United States, as the result of concerted, maximum pressure by the international community. It is essential that the international defense community maintain maximum pressure until North Korea completes the process of CVID for all WMDs and ballistic missiles of all ranges.

Just before arriving here, President Trump, who just received a letter from Kim Jong Un, has reportedly said that he would like to no longer use the term "maximum pressure." On the other hand, I know that President Trump said that he would not lift sanctions until North

Korea agrees to denuclearization, and I understand the pressure will remain in place. I believe that this will lead to the solution of this challenge.

One way to do this is to continue the efforts to prevent North Korea's illegal ship-to-ship transfer of oil and other goods to evade the sanctions originating from UN Security Council resolutions. The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Japan Coast Guard engage in monitoring and surveillance at sea to give out "warnings" to suspicious ships. Since April, multinational surveillance activities operating out of Okinawa have been conducted by patrol aircraft of the United States, Canada and Australia, along with information gathering efforts by a British Royal Navy warship. We need to maintain these activities under multilateral collaboration.

The second point is to maintain and strengthen deterrence. Until we see North Korea's current possession of WMD and ballistic missiles rectified, defense authorities need to remain fully prepared to respond to any situations that may arise. Japan is working to build up defense capabilities, strengthen vigilance and surveillance against ballistic missiles, and with Japan-US alliance at the core, enhance collaboration with countries such as South Korea and Australia through joint exercises and other means.

So far, I have discussed how we should draw a pledge out of North Korea on CVID of WMDs and ballistic missiles, and on concrete steps to fulfill this promise. However, the international community and defense authorities, should take additional steps and to be committed to ensuring North Korea's progress even after the country starts taking concrete measures.

Some of these phases, including the inspection phase at the beginning and the verification phase following disposal, must undergo adequate processes overseen by international organizations. This would include the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) in the case of nuclear facilities, and the OPCW (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons), in the case of chemical weapons.

Japan has experience in many related areas in this regard, having dispatched personnel with missile and chemical weapons expertise to support Iraq's disposal of WMDs. Japan has also sent many JSDF personnel to the OPCW and has first-hand experience in removing the highly poisonous chemical sarin following the gas attack on the Tokyo subway. If North Korea is seriously committed to dismantling its WMDs, Japan is ready to give full support where we have expertise, including through the dispatch of personnel to the OPCW and training personnel from international organizations at JGSDF Chemical School.

In addition, until the disposal of WMDs is completed, preventing these arsenals from spreading to third countries and terrorists is another important issue. Japan has been an active participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative, and perhaps we can reinforce these efforts, by strengthening collaboration through multilateral training, and providing capacity building assistance to partner countries in the region to enhance collaboration between defense and law enforcement authorities in the future.

As we have just seen, members of defense authorities are making a concerted effort to address the issue of North Korea. But the Indo-Pacific region also has various risks of geo-political and geo-economic nature that we must address at the same time.

Natural disasters, which may be referred to as geo-physical risks, are one example of the security risks that need to be addressed by this region as a whole. The Pacific Rim and the coastal areas of Indian Ocean, in particular, are prone to large-scale natural disasters such as mega-earthquakes and tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, typhoons, and cyclones. Climate change may also exacerbate the risk of natural disasters.

My home town of Miyagi Prefecture was badly affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. On a personal level, my home did not escape damage, but much more tragically, many lives were lost as a result of this disaster. However, countries from around the world quickly sent relief missions, who saved many lives by working closely with relevant ministries and agencies including the Japan Self-Defense Forces. Hoping to reciprocate this warm support from all over the world, and to make the most out of our experience, Japan now engages in capacity building assistance with ASEAN and other countries in the field of HA/DR. Our tragic experience has proven that many lives can be saved if defense authorities from around the world cooperate closely on the actual job of disaster relief.

To ensure regional stability and prosperity, we need a concerted approach across the region in addressing various security challenges, including those of maritime security and terrorism. The Indo-Pacific is increasingly becoming the center of the global economy, and we hope to contribute to efforts to maintain it as a free, open, and rules-based “global commons,” that can bring wealth and prosperity to all countries in the region. Japan seeks to enhance a free and open Indo-Pacific as part of its regional strategy, and we will do so with maximum regard and respect to ASEAN’s centrality and unity so that it will help further the development of ASEAN, which is central to security in the Indo-Pacific.

Economic prosperity can be achieved only if peace and stability are ensured. This is why defense authorities of this region must work together to address various security risks in a

collective manner. Distinguished guests, my fellow defense ministers, members of defense establishments, I feel very certain that we can all demonstrate unity in ensuring the security of each country, its people, as well as that of the region. And this in turn will help us successfully overcome the issue of North Korea and add huge momentum in maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

It is necessary for us to address the security challenges of today under a long-term approach and holding a vision for a distant future. Therefore, it is vital that the cooperative relationships enjoyed by defense authorities today are passed down to young officers who work hard at the forefront of national defense.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, young members of the Japan Self Defense Forces and foreign militaries such as the U.S. Forces who came to Japan to give us assistance, saved many lives in the affected areas in cooperation with each other. We believe that “Kizuna,” or comradeship, is the key to shaping the future. Based on this belief, we engage in various efforts to foster “Kizuna,” including by inviting young officers from around the world to ship rider programs onboard Maritime Self Defense Force’s ships. We hope that having a common experience in such programs will help them work together on common security threats, regardless of their positions, in the coming ten, twenty years when they play leading roles in their defense authorities. Recognizing the importance of fostering these relationships, we will continue to give efforts to form Kizuna among young officers who have the future in their hands.

Ladies and gentlemen, please take a moment to imagine North Korea being inside the circle of such “Kizuna.” In North Korea, precious lives were taken away by many natural disasters such as the large-scale flood caused by a typhoon in 2016. If North Korea, having solved the issues of abduction, and nuclear and missile development, comes back to international society, it will not only benefit North Korea, but also further strengthen the peace and stability of this region.

To realize this, I would like to again underline that it is important that North Korea takes concrete measures towards comprehensive resolution of these issues. Japan continues to work together with the like-minded countries to maintain the peace and stability in the region.

Lastly, once again, on June 12th here in Singapore, there is a plan of holding the US-North Korea Summit. We hope every success of the summit meeting.

Thank you.